

Citizen Priorities for Government in Challenging Economic Times

Sixth Round of Countywide Community Forums

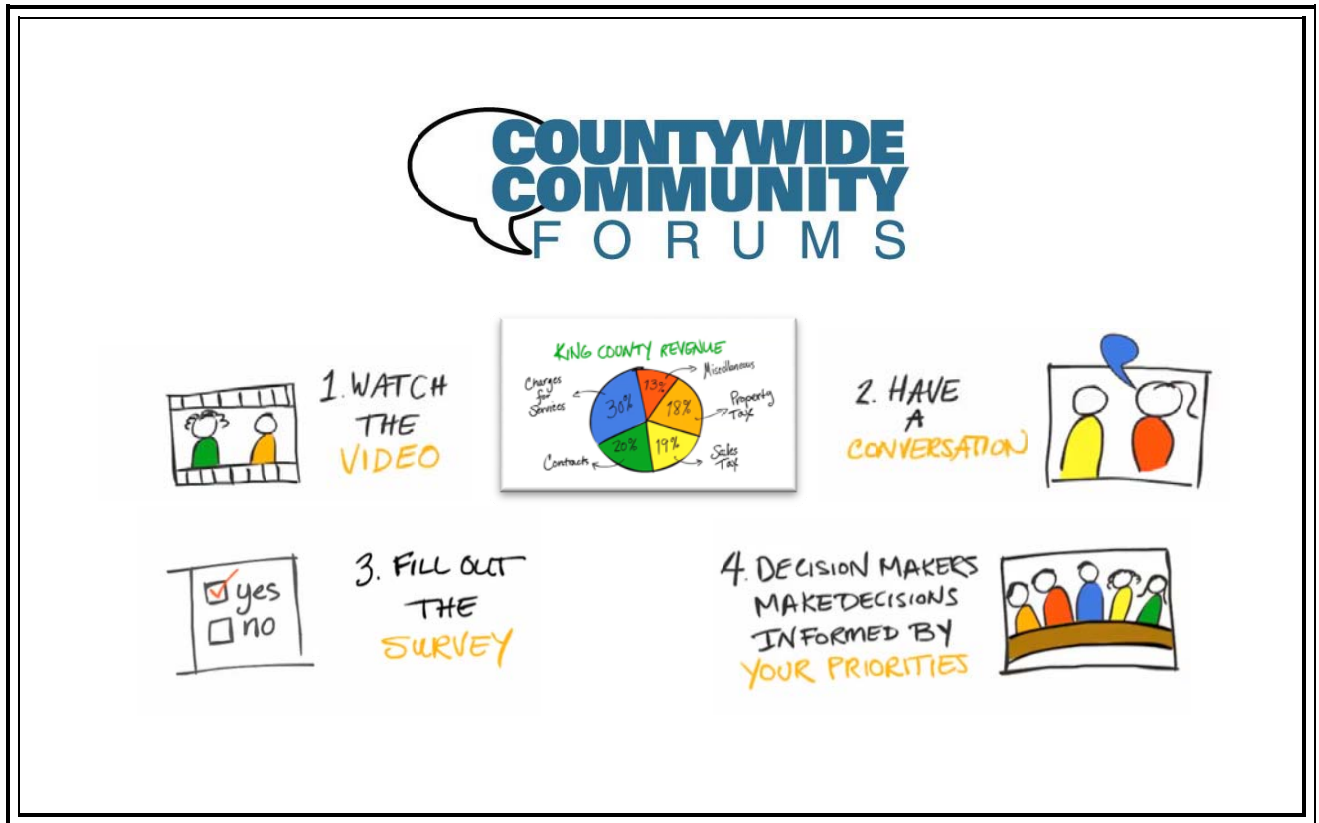
September 11 – October 23, 2010

Final Report

By

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A King County public engagement program in the Auditor's Office





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The King County Auditor's Office provides oversight of county government

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Alternative Formats Available Upon Request

Summary

The topic for the sixth round of Countywide Community Forums, *Citizen Priorities for Government in Challenging Economic Times*, was recommended by the Countywide Community Forums Advisory Steering Committee at its June meeting and approved by the King County Auditor based on established criteria that include timeliness and relevance of the topic.

Between September 11 and October 23, 2010, King County citizens gathered throughout the region to watch a videotaped panel discussion about King County's budgetary challenges featuring King County Executive Dow Constantine, King County Councilmembers Julia Patterson and Reagan Dunn, Sheriff Sue Rahr, Presiding Judge Bruce Hilyer, Budget Director Dwight Dively, and news editor of *The Stranger*, Dominic Holden. In addition to the traditional format of smaller meetings in homes and libraries, larger meetings were sponsored by regional chambers, colleges, or retirement homes. Forty percent of the total 766 surveys were completed online due to intensive efforts to recruit and engage younger people using social media. As a result, and in sharp contrast to previous rounds that were dominated by older respondents, 44% of the respondents are under the age of 30. A majority of respondents (54%) are from Seattle with the remaining 46% coming from 35 cities and Unincorporated King County. Council District 4 is best represented with 24% of the respondents, followed by District 2 (18%), District 6 (12%), District 8 (11%), and District 3 with 10%.

Eighty-one percent of the respondents do not work for the county or belong to a union. Seventy-three percent identify themselves as white. Respondents are mostly long time county residents with 65% having lived in King County more than 10 years. Forty-eight percent of respondents have at least a four-year college degree.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents are slightly to extremely satisfied with King County institutions as a whole (24% are dissatisfied). Seventy-nine percent recognize that King County's decisions impact them and 42% agree that King County has been making a good faith effort to solve its budget deficit and will continue to do so (24% disagree).

When asked which single option from a list of options that King County is either already using or planning to use soon will be the most effective at decreasing the general fund deficit, 27% of respondents select *increasing efficiency/productivity*, followed by *cutting labor costs* (23%) and *increasing revenues* (22%). Only 7% select *making programs/service cuts*.

Sixty-five percent agree that *program efficiencies and/or increased productivity* is likely to fix the long-term structural gap, while 62% think it could fix the 2011 budget. By contrast, 53% think *employee salary and/or benefit cuts* is likely to fix the 2011 budget but only 46% think it could fix the long-term structural gap. Similarly, cuts in specific services are seen as a likely fix to the 2011 budget by a slight majority (52%) but 45% think it could fix the long-term structural gap. *Increasing tax revenues* is viewed as a likely long-term fix by 50% of the respondents, while 49% agree it will fix the 2011 budget. *Across the board budget cuts* is a likely option for the 2011 budget for 42% while 34% see it as a likely solution for the long-term structural gap.

When asked about strategies other than laying off employees to reduce labor costs, 35% think *reducing cost-of-living adjustments* is the most acceptable strategy. This is followed by *reducing healthcare benefits* (18%), *reducing wages* and *imposing a hiring freeze* (both at 11%) and *increasing furloughs* (10%). On a related question, 64% say that more of the county's collective bargaining units should agree to forgo their cost-of-living increases.

Respondents are closely divided with 31% supporting and 29% opposing having King County be *allowed by the legislature to levy the same taxes that cities have, such as business and occupation tax and/or utility tax*.

The largest majority of respondents (68%) think that, *even as it is considering program cuts, King County should invest in further performance management and budget reporting systems that deliver more efficiency, transparency and accountability so that decision-makers and constituents can be better informed*.

When asked to consider difficult tradeoffs, respondents are sharply divided with 41% thinking that *we need to rethink our budget and make deep, permanent, long-term cuts because the current level of services is unsustainable* while 39% think that *we must find short-term temporary reductions to the budget until the economy recovers, so we don't lose the investments we have already made in programs and people*.

When provided with another difficult choice if/when those two choices conflict, a majority of respondents (51%) agree that King County *must provide a safety net of human and other services to those most affected by the economic crisis* while 33% would rather have King County *limit the tax impact on all county residents to help them cope with the economic crisis*.

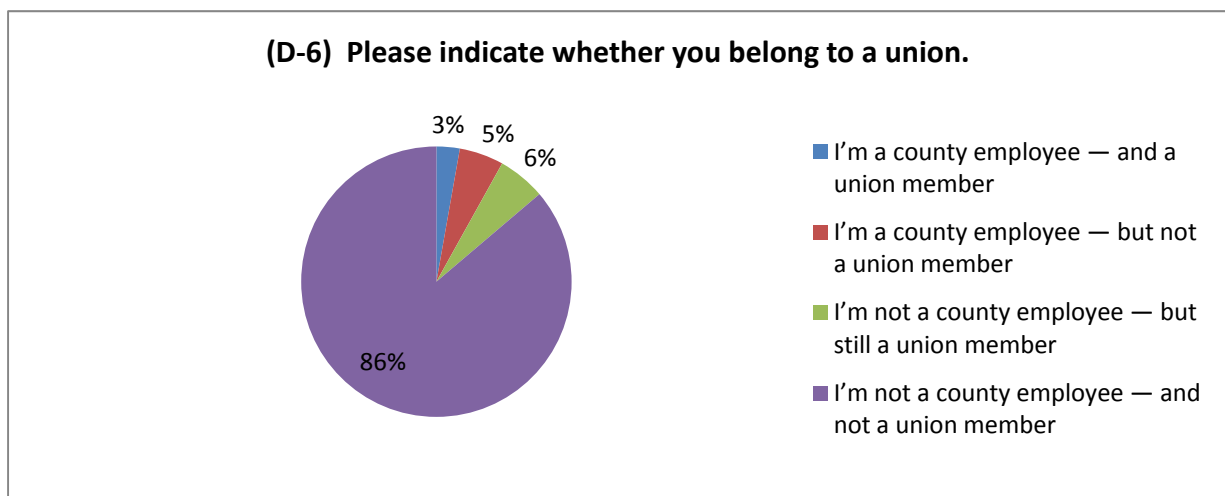
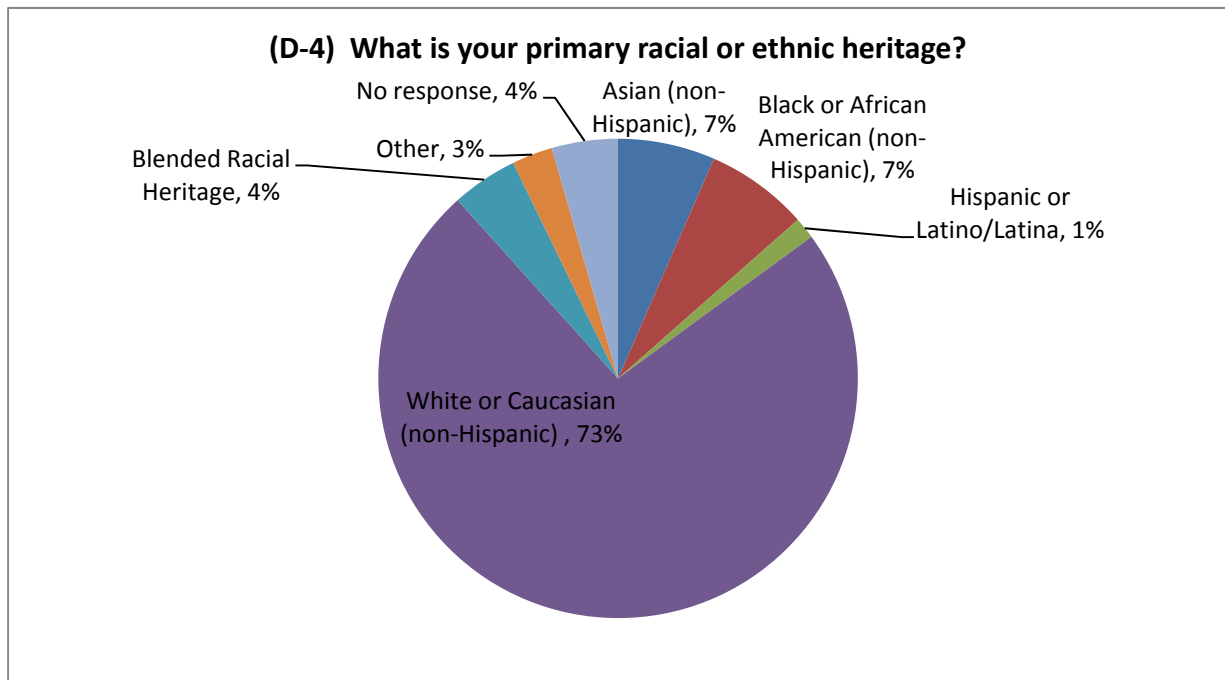
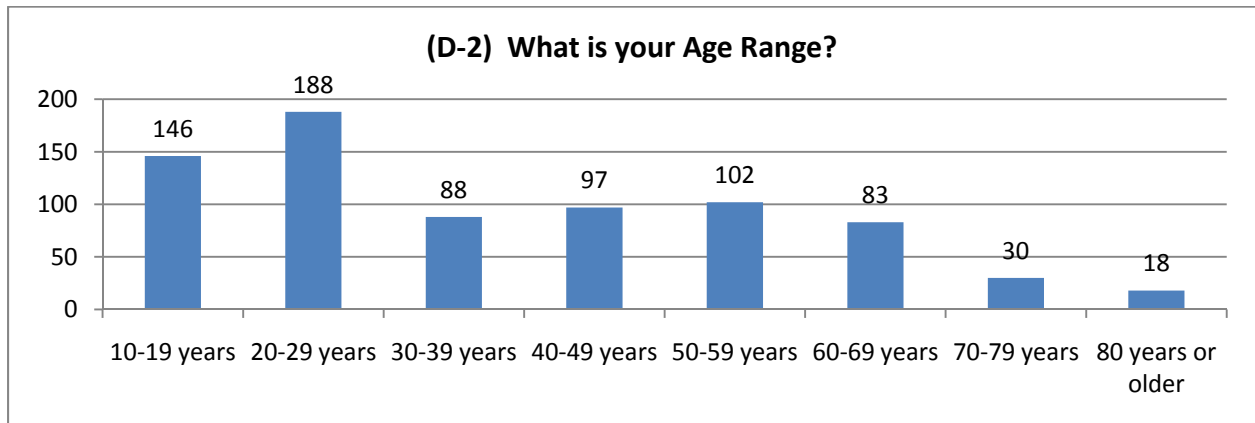
When asked for necessary staffing cuts as a tradeoff to *preserving existing county programs for crime prevention and crime victim counseling and treatment*, cuts to Court's staffing are supported by 40% (20% opposing), to Prosecutor's Office by 38% (20% opposing), and to Sheriff's Office staff by 31% (38% opposing).

Finally, in a series of questions about the forum process, the video was deemed somewhat to very fair and even-handed by 51% (23% considered it biased) while 61% agree that all or most of the major issues were covered in the Opinionnaire[®].

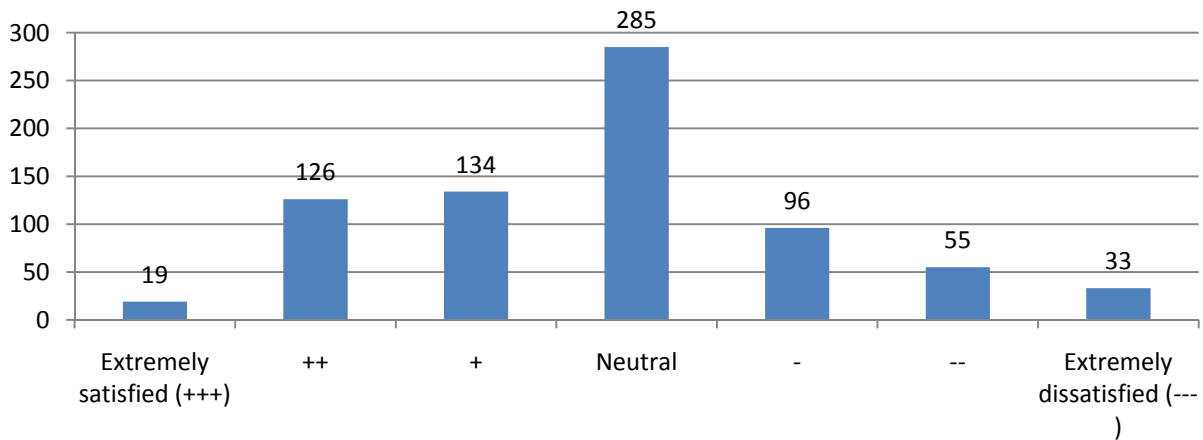
For over three-quarter (76%), participating in the forum positively/very positively changed their perception that King County listens. Sixty-three percent feel better informed about King County as a result of participating in the forums and, for 58%, participation in the forums will have a positive influence on their involvement in other local decision-making actions.

Sixty-four percent of the respondents agree that, overall, the Countywide Community Forums program is on the right track.

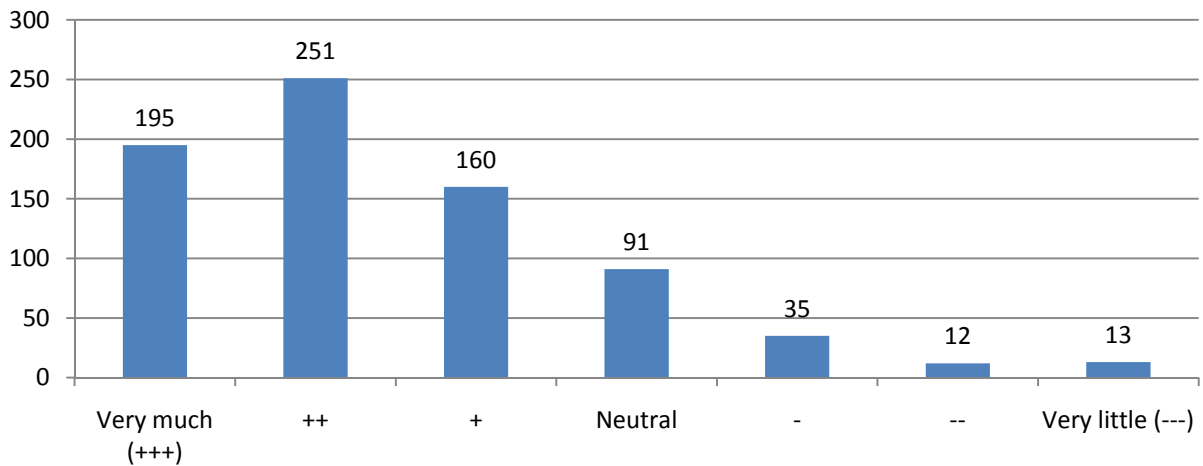
Survey Responses



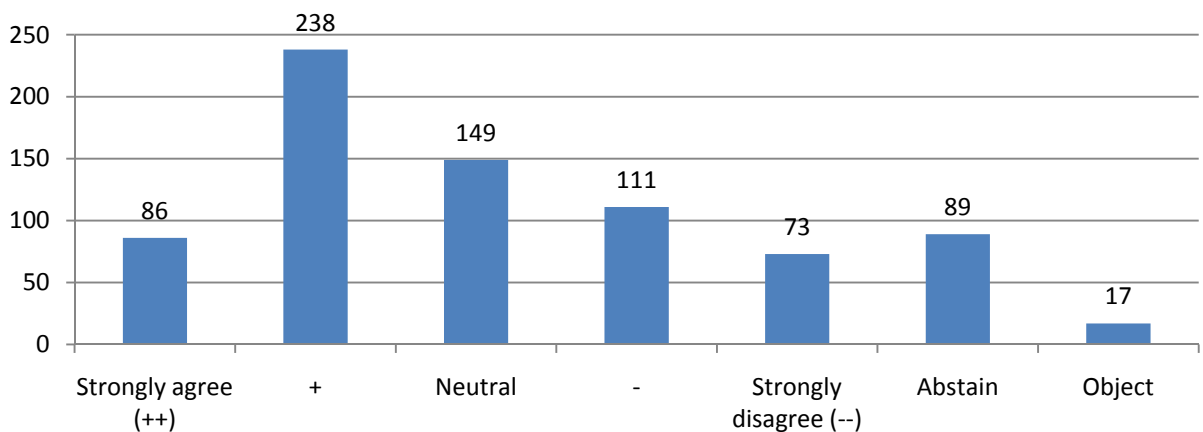
(D-11) Overall, what level of satisfaction do you have with King County institutions as a whole?



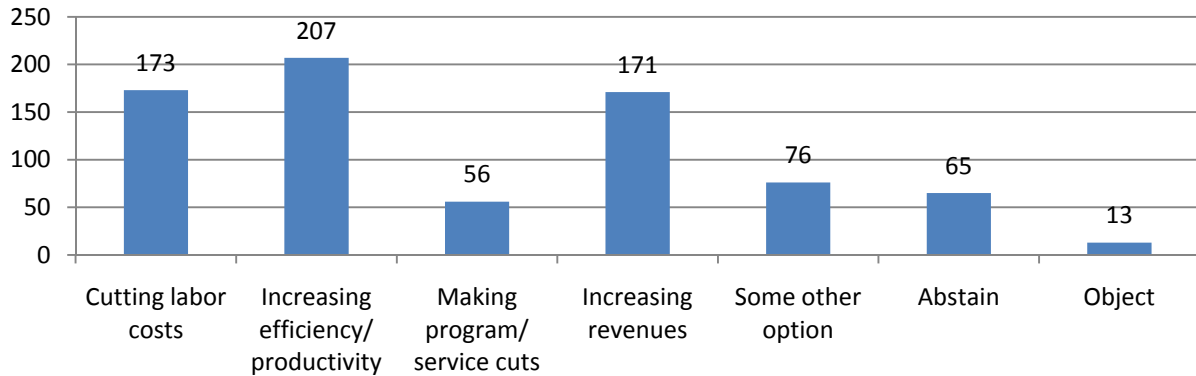
(D-12) How much do you believe King County decisions impact you?



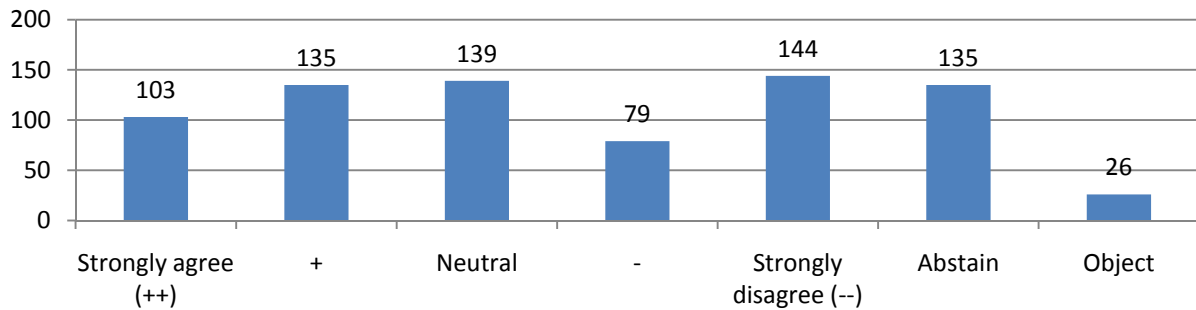
(T-1) King County has been making a good-faith effort to solve its general fund deficit and will continue to do so.



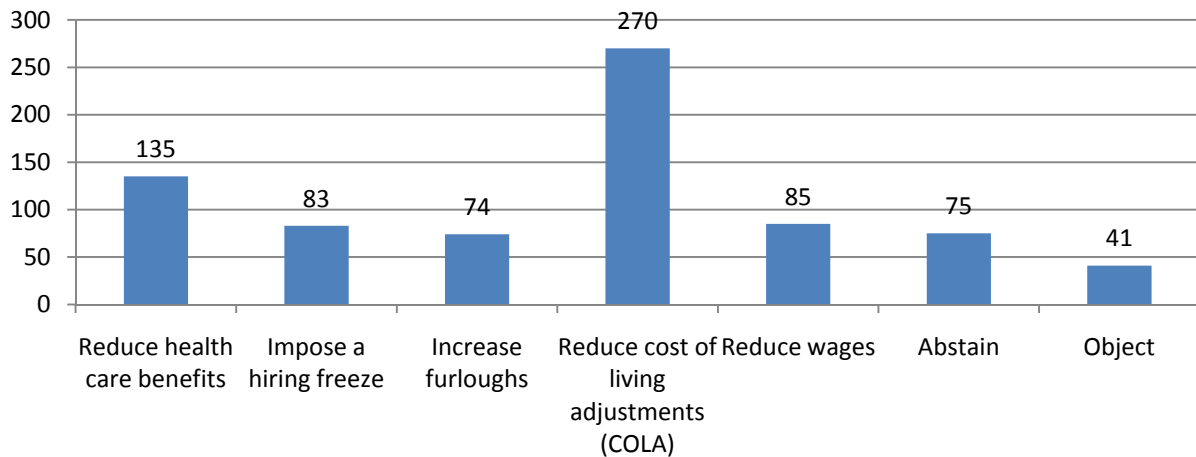
(T-2) The video described several options that King County is either using now or considering later to decrease the general fund deficit. Which single option do you think will be the most effective?



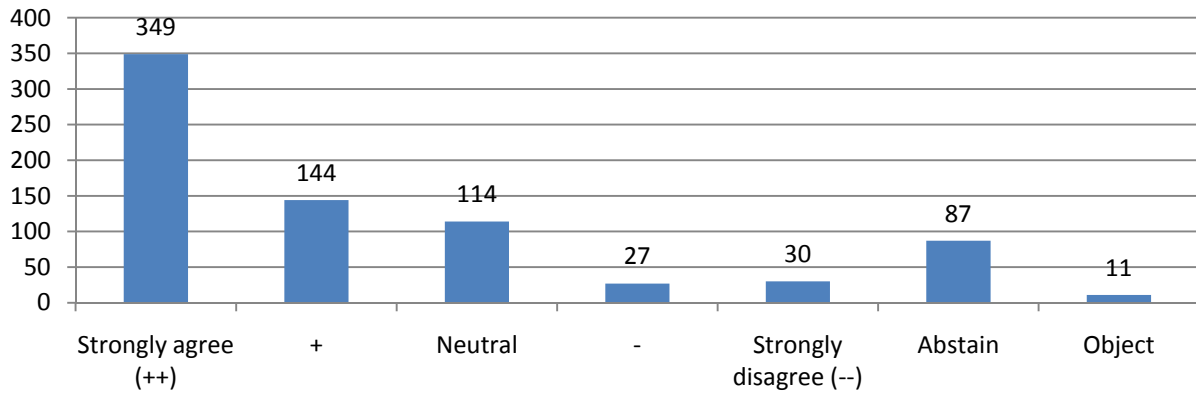
(T-3) King County should be allowed by the state legislature to levy the same types of taxes that cities have, such as a county business and occupation tax or a county tax on utility usage or both.



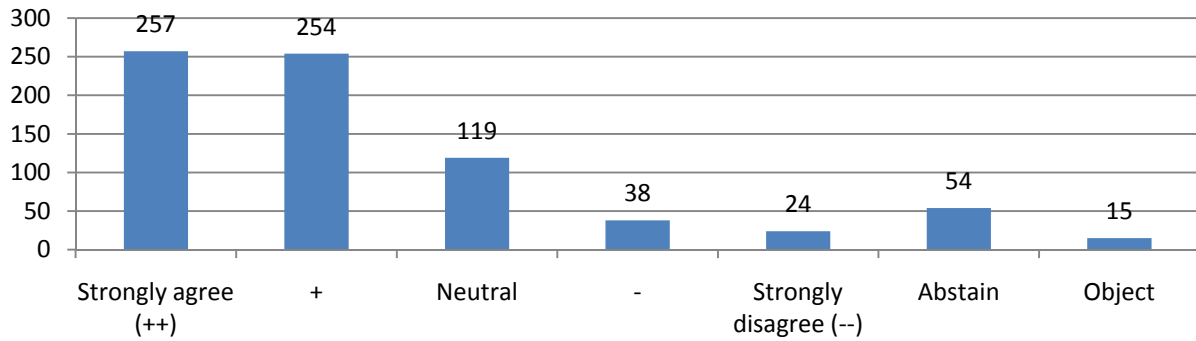
(T-4) If labor costs need to be reduced, which single strategy would you view as the most acceptable, other than laying off employees?



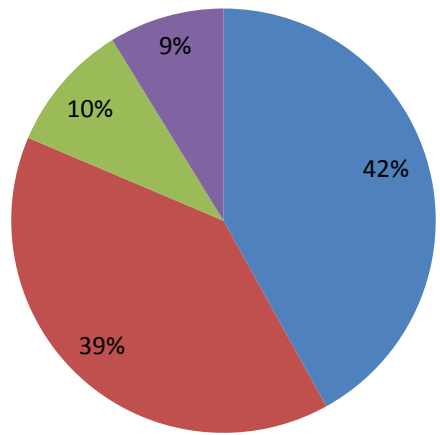
(T-5) More of the county's collective bargaining units should agree to forgo their cost-of-living increases.



(T-6) Even as it is considering program cuts, King County should invest in further performance management and budget reporting systems that deliver more efficiency, transparency and accountability so that decision-makers and constituents can be better

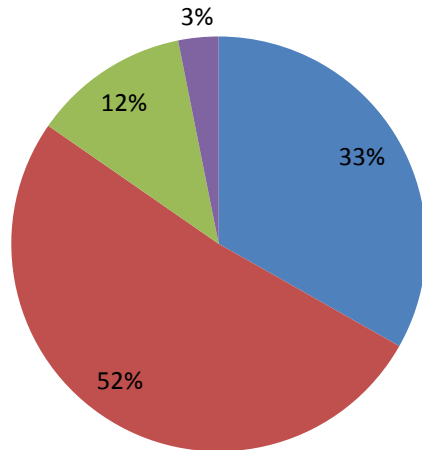


(T-7) Which of the following two statements comes closest to your personal long-term view regarding the budget?



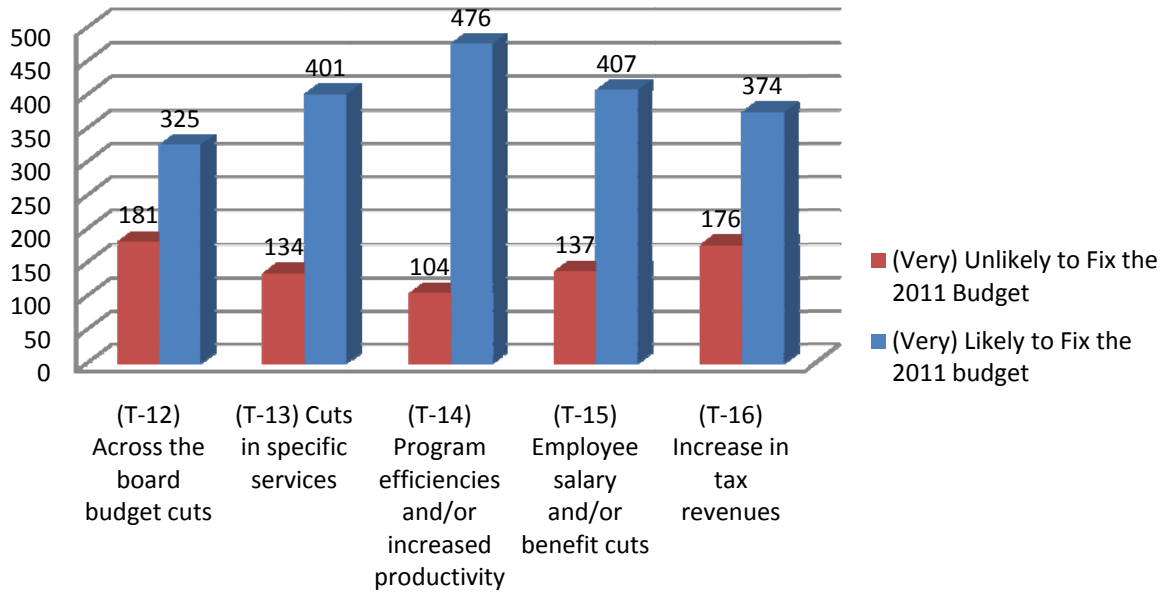
- We need to rethink our budget and make deep, permanent, long-term cuts because the current level of services is unsustainable
- We must find short-term temporary reductions to the budget until the economy recovers, so we don't lose the investments we have already made in programs and people.
- Abstain
- Object

(T-8) In challenging economic times, what should be King County's priority, if/when these two criteria conflict?

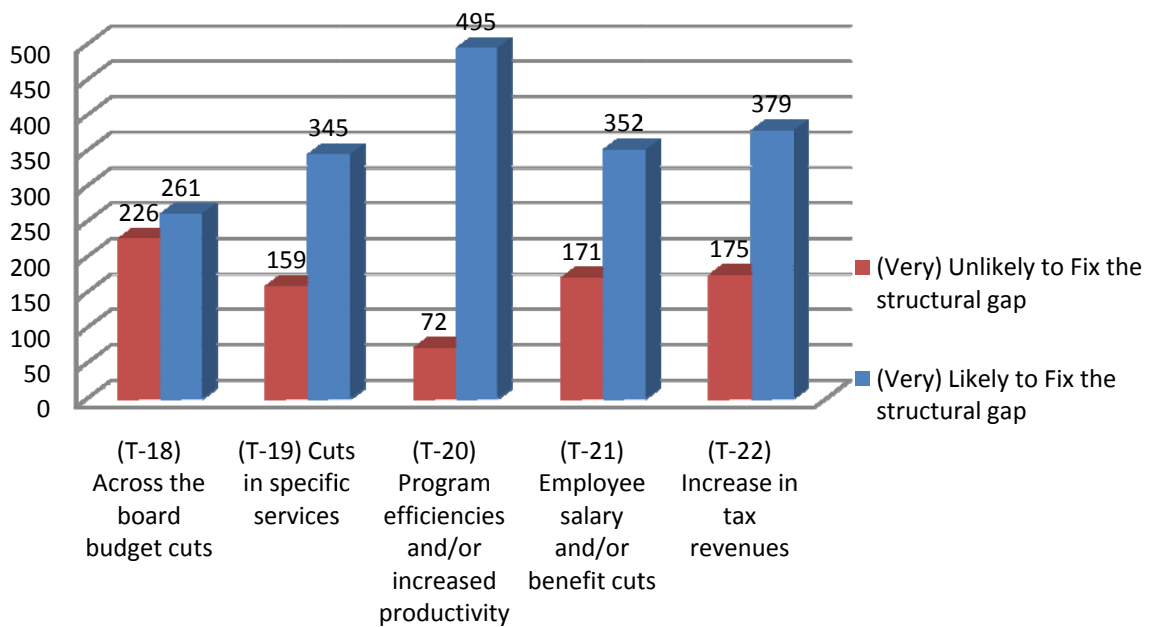


- Limit the tax impact on all county residents to help them cope with the economic crisis
- Provide a safety net of human and other services to those most affected by the economic crisis
- Abstain
- Object

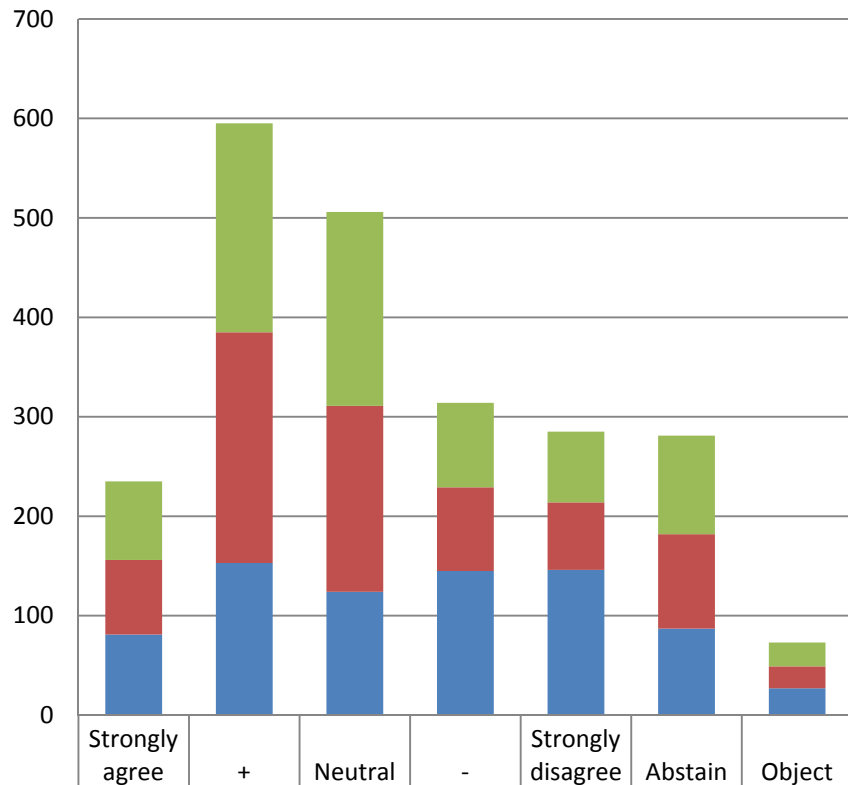
Actions to fix the 2011 budget



Actions to fix the long-term structural gap

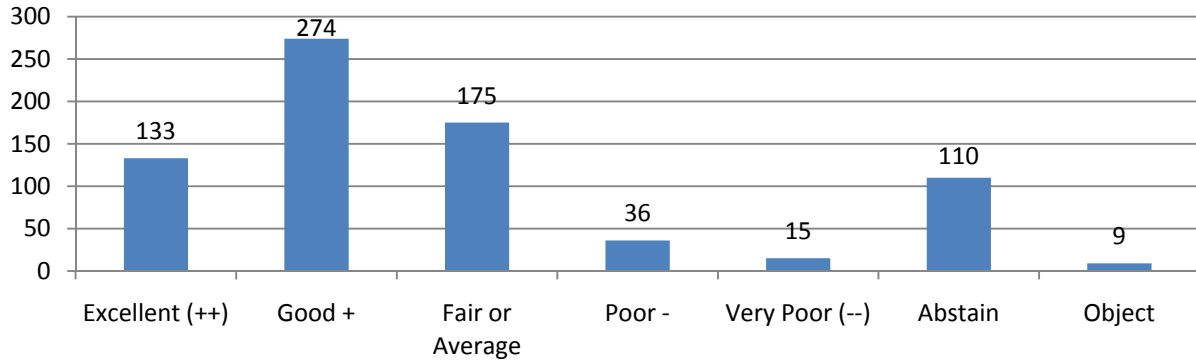


(T-9 through T-11) If it is necessary to cut staffing levels in various law and criminal justice departments to preserve existing county programs for crime prevention and crime victim counseling and treatment, how strongly would you agree or not to support

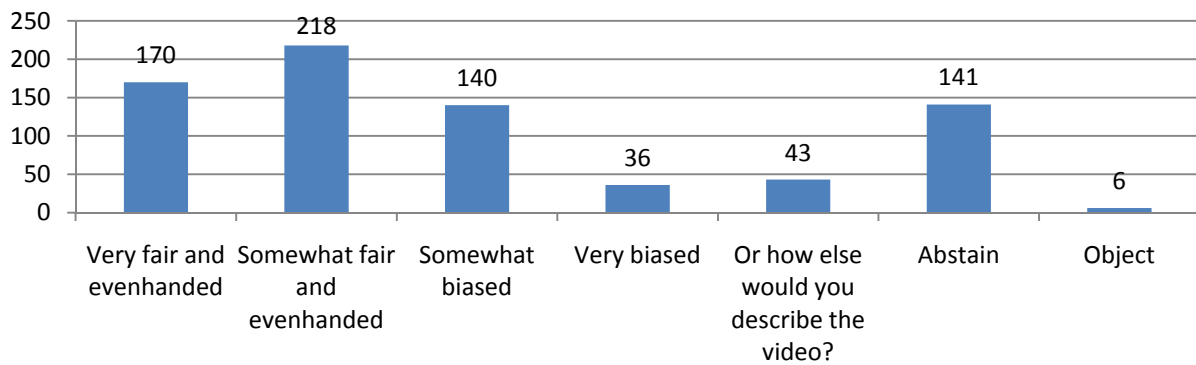


(T-11) Prosecutor's Office staffing	79	210	195	85	71	99	24
(T-10) Court staffing	75	232	187	84	68	95	22
(T-9) Sheriff's Office staffing	81	153	124	145	146	87	27

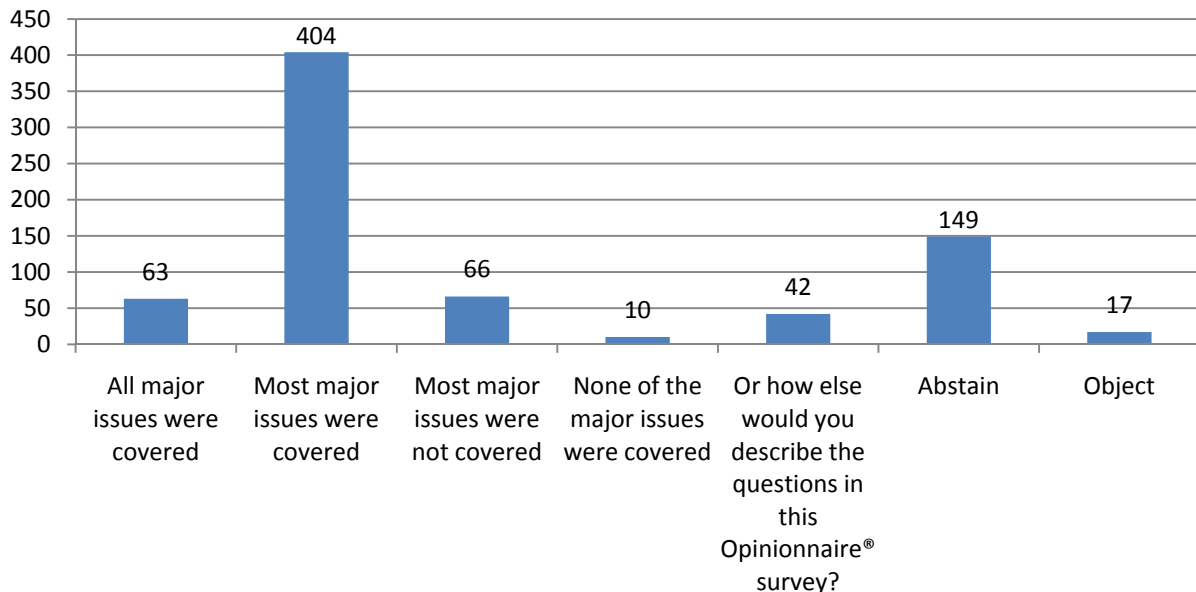
(P-3) How do you rate the information presented in the topic video?



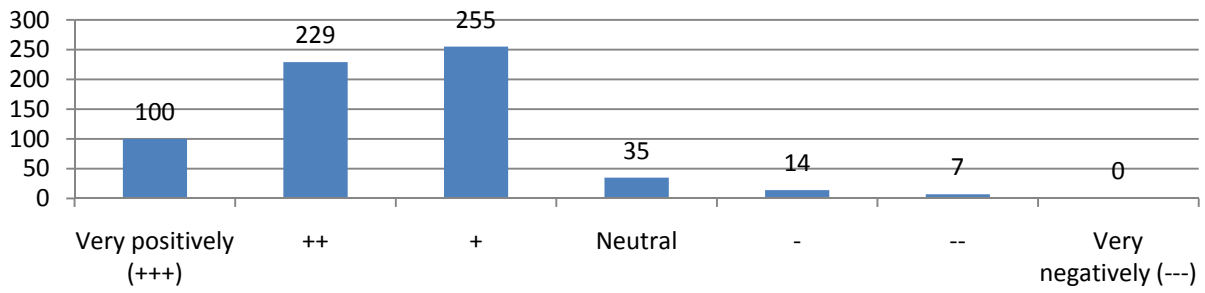
(P-5) In general, do you think the topic video was:



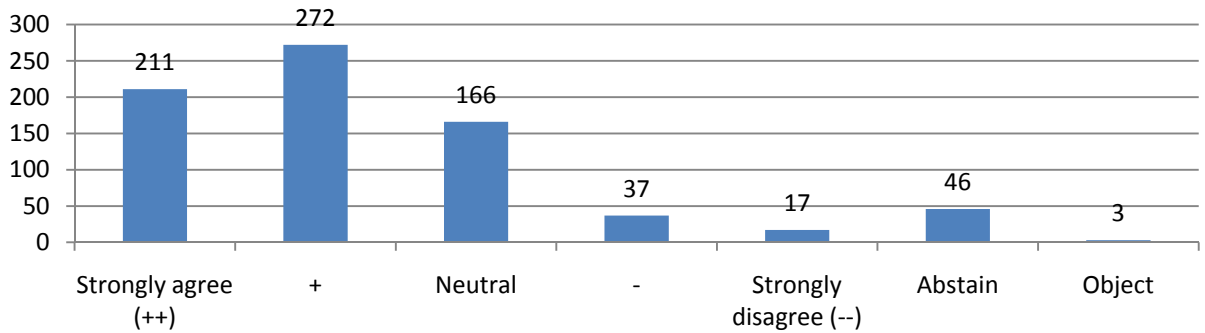
(P-6) How well did the question in this Opinionnaire® survey address the topic of “Citizen Priorities for Government in Challenging Economic Times?”



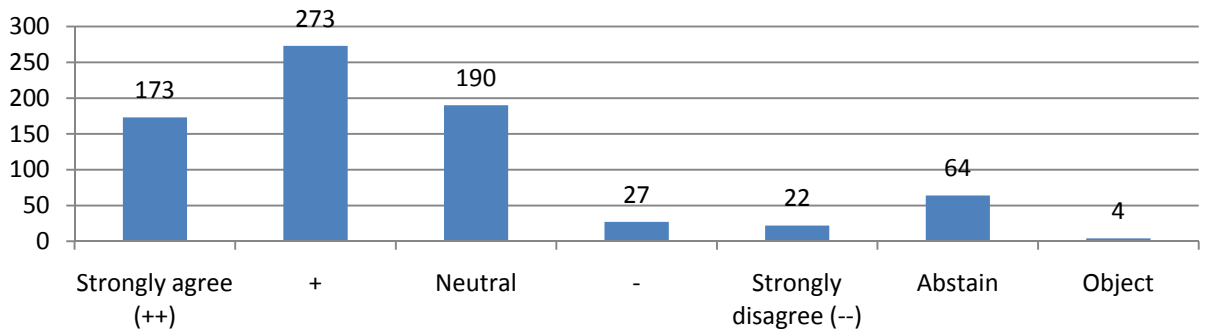
(P-7) How positively or negatively has your participation in these Countywide Community Forums changed your perception about whether King County listens to your opinions?



(P-8) I feel better informed about the King County budget as a result of participating in this forum.



(P-9) My participation in this forum will have a positive influence on my involvement in other local decision-making actions.



Survey Comments by King County Council District

District 1

What else can fix the budget?

Begin with cuts at the top first with an across the board 10% salary cut for each of the next 3 years.

Cut costs and increase revenue

find regional efficiencies, regional government

investing in the labor and availability of people who live here through leveraging barter systems and trading

They are targeting areas that will elicit the most public outrage, and they are not capable of understanding which areas have the most long-term impact.

"Program efficiencies and increased productivity" is the county's code word for let's pull the wool over the council's eyes so we can keep our pet projects. All King County employees know this. It's an open secret if employed by the county. The "performance measures" are written to make departments appear to be more productive than they are, and to protect flailing pet projects

A large amount of money can be saved by addressing all the costs involved in providing rewards for illegal and legal immigrants to this area. Why? Because the costs are large and immigration is the driving factor in our too rapid population growth, and that is what is exacerbating all our cost factors.

A state income tax is a good idea. Not sure if that can get into county coffers, but it should. The "have" support the "have not"

All state employees should volunteer half of their service time. Full time employees work 8 hours (4 hours paid & 4 hours volunteer).

Cancel the King County Ferry District, sell all the boats. Will save more than 1% and is permanent. Dumb idea from the start.

Essential services fees on sewer and water, and an electrical power tax, an increase in the gas tax.

Make attendance and timely arrival at work a job performance criteria for 2011 and after. Use federal standards for FMLA, not lenient county standards.

NOTE: Increasing (or new) taxes will NOT increase tax revenue. It WILL drive out the generators of revenue.

Revisit dedicated spending issues and let citizens vote based on what is happening now

Sliding scale taxes especially on luxury items, the more the item costs, the higher the tax. Large expensive motor boat - 15 - 20% sales tax compared to a bicycle at 5% sales tax.

The lowest hanging fruits are furlough days and hours. Each employee will figure out how to prioritize tasks, do their job faster, or allow another to do it for them.

If you could ask county decision-makers one question, what would it be?

Are you willing to sacrifice your job in order to initiate a strong movement to increase revenues and get out there in the community and demonstrate why basic services are important and how each household currently benefits from public safety, public health, human services, ecological standards, good transit innovations, OR are you afraid to say what needs to be said.

Are YOU willing to, or have YOU already taken a pay CUT (not a 'decreased increase' but a cut)?

Can you get me a job, a well paying one?

Do you really believe all waste has been eliminated? Why did you negotiate unsustainable contracts? Of course county employees should pay part of their health care.

Eliminate water Taxi and the electronic trolley (train), use more contracted out services such as road service so the County does not have paid employees doing little during winter months.

It is time to recognize that unlimited growth is not possible, and that it is time to recognize just what "limits" truly means. That our immigration reward policy is based on accepted truism that growth is unlimited while providing abundance of profit-making cheap labor.

Please tell me how you can be more transparent and communicate with the public better. For instance, as someone who works with several county employees as part of my job, I know they work hard and while they make good wages they aren't rich. The county needs to be more transparent about this.

What benefits do citizens living in Seattle get from the county?

Who decided we should have a King County Ferry District? Why did they cancel the contract with Argosy and increase costs 300% during a time of financial hardship?

What single person or entity has the most influence on your decision making?

What's going to happen to people if all human services are cut? Who will pick up the slack? Also I know it's not part of this survey, but there are big problems with transit funding too, is this being resolved or will bus routes have to be cut?

Where is your toughness to make the hard decisions we elected you to make (running to the ballot box to ask for easy, albeit temporary, fixes from the voters is shirking your job duties)?

Why are City of Seattle property owners assessed lower property taxes than those in suburban cities, even though Seattle properties are holding their value to a higher extent?

Why aren't you self insuring the workers for their Health care?

Why do you insist on paying more in salaries and benefits, together with job security, to county employees when employees in the private sector get less pay and benefits with less job security?

Why do you not run county government within income bounds?

Why does the County act like in isolation? Our citizens are truly our resources.

Why does the county not consider contracting with community and faith-based organizations for social services? To do so would call for a competent all inclusive policy evaluation and restructuring. This process would then be monitored by competent assessors and data carefully recorded over time to prove efficiency and transparency.

Why don't you have the courage to stand up to the unions and tell them that the current wage and benefit plan is not working, that total compensation needs to get in line with the private sector, beginning immediately with the next contract, and that they can be a part of the solution or they can continue to be the problem

Why don't you legalize marijuana and tax the heck out of it

Why won't you be strong and combat the unions' contracts the next time around ... no industry bows down to unions any more in the USA ... why should the County Gov't???

Will the leadership of the county address the critical issue that the cost of labor is unsustainable and stop the hemorrhaging that has resulted from year after year granting generous step increases (including allowing healthcare costs to skyrocket out of control)?

Would be willing to allow business-type County agencies to competitively-bid business functions to outside third-party vendors that are currently being performed by general government County agencies?

Would you consider setting up the metro public transportation system in nodes especially due to the landscape geography here? Have lots of fast buses between major nodes and then slower buses travel out from the nodes. That's why I don't use the bus because of the slow and constant stops. Get quickly to a node, and then walk?

District 2

What else can fix the budget?

Asking for a single option is not an option. Not one thing is the main solution.

Cut environmental projects/programs and privatize liquor sales.

Cutting law enforcement - already 11% from fixed fund. We can get rid of a huge amount of cost through cut some of that 76%

Don't imprison nonviolent offenders

Focus new revenue policies towards wealthiest 5% of individuals and companies. Legalize and regulate drugs.

I think a combination of increasing efficiency and educating more college students might help. College students focus on their day to day life and don't pay attention to these issues. If more clubs/classes/organizations were informed then there would probably be a bigger response in opinions to the problems.

Increase certain taxes

Increasing revenue and increase taxes

Must be creative in all areas. No more status quo. Need new and different revenues. Need progressive tax.

Not necessarily raising revenues immediately but have options for sustainable revenues

Only saw two options being presented, either increase taxes or lower employment...

Pass marijuana law, but highly tax it. Make businesses making a high amount of revenue pay more taxes.

Penny pinching means less computers, no watercoolers, no weekend seminars, and not cutting community programs.

Reducing the number of non-violent criminals in prison.

Renegotiate public sector pay wages for some.

Renegotiating employee contracts.

Tax corporations or luxury services, also make program efficient by taking out broken middle contractors

They suggested cutting law enforcement; I think we might be able to dig into that 76% of general funds.

"To FIX?" No...How about "To HELP FIX?" 1) Lease the naming of King County International Airport to industry. (e.g.; UPS field? FedEX field?) 2) Somehow, find a way to collect more \$\$\$ from pre-paid ORCA pass holders. I paid \$38 for my annual METRO/Sound Transit pass (!!!). I would have gladly paid \$200. (How about a place for undercharged pre-paid ORCA pass-holders like me to DONATE, not to transit-only, but to the General Fund

1. Increase cost of certain services

Actually allow agencies to compete for service contracts with best bids.

Although this is kind of passing the buck, you could have cities incorporate parts of unincorporated areas to decrease policing costs, etc.

California's governor just set the penalty for less than 1oz of pot at a \$100 fine. That would do wonders to free up police and reduce court/prosecutor/jail costs.

Complete top to bottom assessment of structure of the King County system in order to ensure smooth functioning for the future and eliminate wasteful jobs and processes.

Cut wages in the legislative branch.

Cut, cut, cut!

Cuts to human services are unacceptable. We need to invest more than ever to prevent long-term costs. Creative revenues like selling things above their value for specific causes.

Find ways to increase revenue by legalizing marijuana and taxing it.

Focus new revenue policies towards wealthiest individuals and companies.

Have elected serve as volunteers, no salary. They can quit spending on advertising and live off of that money

I do not believe there is something like tax increases and wage reductions will fix our crisis, indeed, it will help, but it will not fix. We need to look for more than a quick fix during a crisis, a solution.

I'm not sure I like it, but there is a sales tax increase on the ballot. No doubt, wages are not a long-term solution. Are workers to expect less, spend less. The average worker must have good means if the economic health of the area is to be good. Hopefully the income tax will pass and give some balance to all funding.

Income Tax on wealthy

Increase corporate tax on MNCs over the long run, but at the same time provide incentives.

Increase tax on luxury items. Stop drawing resources from those most affected by the recession.

Involve citizens and agency employees in creatively looking at the budget and identifying breakthrough solutions.

It would be cool to try to raise money by doing something for the community-like a concert- that raises money for the deficit and creates community amongst King County residents.

Law, Safety, and Justice gets too much money.

Legalize and tax marijuana & prostitution

Make money: (1) sell clean water (2) make biofuel and sell ethanol.

Maybe investing in a short "Ad" campaign on television and homes of voters that will give them this information and appeal for their help.

More direct citizen input, like yours.

Privatize liquor stores, more taxes on things such as cigarettes and alcohol, and all businesses should pay a pollution tax.

Reduce cost of jails; find less costly alternatives for nonviolent offenders; rework entire approach to criminal justice (anti-racist policies, early intervention, fines/house-arrest/community service for nonviolent offenders, quit cutting libraries and youth services)

Reduce services in the unincorporated areas

Restructuring county government, sustainable long-term funding options, rethinking drug war costs.

Same as above, some of the Executive offices need budget cuts in their offices. Not all employees should be looked at for cutting. Jail budgets should go before Human Services!

The choices of the cuts need much more citizen review. As I vote for the new tax increase, I really would like to know that sheriff staff and human services will far more benefit than pothole fixes.

Tax the rich

To build on the repeated statement of "with increased efficiency and productivity, "a clean sweep of the government is needed. What if a private (or publically elected?) third party came in to address inefficiencies in programs and lowered bureaucracy in the government. Think of the money to be saved and spent where we need it most!

Would it be impossible to have County employees pay a larger share of health care premiums? I don't like the idea of their benefits being cut, but this is a huge cost for the County to bear. It might even make those employees more likely to support more comprehensive, long-term health care reform.

If you could ask county decision-makers one question, what would it be?

Are there any monies that are simply being wasted? Meaning they are going to ineffective programs?

Are there resources available for concerned citizens to get the word out about budget needs and what we can do to keep our county services up and running?

Are you going to cut your own wages to cover the gap?

Are you willing to give up political considerations (such as the 40-40-20 split of transit service hours) to find efficiencies that may resolve King County's problems?

Are your managers doing the best job possible of weeding out poor performers? How is your performance review system working? I've had poor experiences with Work Force Development job counselors who are not really helping people and yet pulling down big salaries. Are there a lot of positions like that in the system where people hide out?

Charge the rich and get something or charge the poor and get NOTHING.

Does the county have a "rainy day" fund?

Have you considered cooperation with neighboring counties to realize economies of scale at a regional level (e.g. KCDOT partner/merge with SnoDOT/PierceDOT, Metro partner/merge with Community Transit/Pierce Transit)?

How can we be sure that the great promise that was developed through Forward Thrust, the Housing Levys, the Human Services Levy and other community-building initiatives can be re-invented as we recover from the Recession?

How can we change our entire approach to public safety in a way that reduces costs and actually improves outcomes for at risk youth?

How can we possibly elect someone(s) to do governmental housekeeping, if you will?

How do you think we could best redistribute wealth in the county?

If I pay for my yard waste to be collected, why do I have to pay for the compost in return? Seems like I should get a free bag or something. Why are we in a budget crisis when some of the wealthiest people in the world live in our county? Sad.

If you alone were "czar" of this budget issue and you could address it anyway you wanted, how would you do it?

Merge King County and Seattle functions?

On the dedicated funds how much of that money is really needed to fund those services?

Other than contributing through these multiple choices, are there other ways that people could be physically present in budget meetings?

Privatize public utilities?

Since King County is so large, which areas/cities are seeing the most impact from these decisions? What can be done to create solutions in main problem areas/cities?

What are the political barriers to overhauling the budget (discretionary and dedicated) in order to create a sustainable future for KC?

What are you doing in your office to help with budget cuts?

What do you think about selling recycled water to people living in rural areas for farming as a way to raise revenues?

What is the last budgetary decision you want to consider?

What is the most effective way for King County to generate revenue?

What personal cuts is your office making? What is your furlough number?

What would you do if you were homeless or in poverty and depended on basic human services? Cut them???

When you go out day to day, are YOU doing a good job that you think needs to be paid X amount of money?

Why are cuts always directed to the most vulnerable populations? People of color, disabled, incarcerated, children?

Why are you cutting funding for programs serving the most needy in our community?

Why aren't you more publicly visible? Out among the people or via public communication

Why cut from law enforcement? That seems like it would be the last thing to cut.

Why do we spend so much on criminal justice? If we invest more in drug treatment, education, mental health treatment and other human services, will it impact how much we need to jail people?

Why do you impose restrictions on dedicated revenue funds, such as cutting administrative costs, when the dedicated fund has to turn around and give that money (money that can only be billed for admin) back to the state or the feds? That doesn't make sense!

Why don't you do a five year budget or two year budget, so you can look longer term? Why can't we change dedicated funds?

Why have you allowed salaries and health benefits to increase faster than the private sector!

Why should you receive better health care than most of your constituents?

Will you work to reverse the ridiculous tax and budget constraints placed on us by Tim Eyman

Would you still want the job you currently hold, if your salary / Benefits were cut by 20%?

Youth prevention programs reduce all criminal justice related costs so why are you not putting more money there!

District 3

What else can fix the budget?

A lot of programs are already operating on low capacity, further cuts would be detrimental.

Borrow money, spend to create jobs.

Cutting labor and salary costs, increase efficiency and prog/svc cuts; together

Do an analysis of how much money actually gets spent due to the fact that someone didn't take responsibility for their actions and address that problem, not how to continue to support it on less income or more taxes to pay for it.

Focusing on a single measure is neither fair nor rational. The answer is ALL of the above, beginning with identifying the reasons for the structural gap and addressing them with sustainable solutions.

Increase sales tax.

Large tax cuts! More money for people/business to spend in the economy

More fed money rather than wars!

Renegotiating union contracts, moving union/public employee retirements to private 401k

State income tax.

As said, borrow money from the federal government.

Charge more for services - pay for what you get.

Charge people who live the furthest away more for services such as policing, sewer, etc.

Construction. Unnecessary roads and projects. Employees taking advantage of government spending. How many times have you waiting in construction and seen 1 guy working and 5 others just standing around watching. Better productivity needed. This is why the projects take forever and are so expensive even the big fancy signs or decorative blocks along freeway ramps. A plain slab of cement is a lot cheaper.

Cut jobs or wages of staff, including unionized staff.

Cut salaries of executives and council members. They make more than the average unincorporated king county resident. They could live on a reduced income.

Disproportionately "tax" the individuals and their families who are disproportionately taxing the system due to a lack of overall personal responsibility endemic to their lives, not temporary economic hardship.

Eliminate services that can and should be provided by cities to their citizens.

Eliminate wasteful jobs that have no benefit to the citizens of King County.

Hold the line on wage increases--carefully evaluate overtime and reduce when possible.

I believe our public transportation facilities should be using or researching more efficient engines, or modes of transportation, to result in a more budget friendly service that also creates jobs.

Introduce Quality Improvement/LEAN approach to systematically streamlining departments!

KC should only pay for employee premiums. Family members should be own premiums. Charge rent for SWD Transfer Stations

Legalize gambling, prostitution, and marijuana and tax it.

Put pressure on federal govt. to cease pre-emptive wars and return help to local govts, education, healthcare, etc.

Reduce salaries by 30%

Re-open collective bargaining agreements to renegotiate union benefits

Sell real property that the county does not have a critical need to own.

Tax breaks for people and businesses! This will increase the companies' revenues and pump more into the economy. The business will have money to expand and hire more people, increasing the money people have.

Tax on risky behaviors such as, alcohol and tobacco. Legalize marijuana and tax it. Raise prices for speeding tickets.

If you could ask county decision-makers one question, what would it be?

Are any of the "dedicated funds" more than it absolutely needs to be? Is there any way these funds can help pay for the other under-funded services (think outside the box).

Can you explain the benefits package that county employees receive that seems to be under attack?

Can you relinquish some of the services provided to city citizens to optimize the services provided to unincorporated citizens?

County employees are always taking hits to cover budget deficits. If cuts need to be made, shouldn't tax payers feel the impact?

Do you feel empowered to make tough decisions? If not, how can we fix that?

Do you fund things like public art? If so, this is outrageous and does not belong in the budget. Do you fund programs for illegal aliens? If so, STOP.

Do you know that investing in early childhood has an ROI of up to 18%? If we don't do a better job of supporting all families with young children, we will need increased, endless funding for law and criminal systems.

How are you addressing the underlying issues that create the structural gap?

How can you justify giving yourself/yourselves a COLA?

How do we change the law that prevents the county from increasing revenue?

If they are wanting to cut wages and benefits to employees how much do they make and would they make the same cut to their paychecks?

If you cut the wages and healthcare benefits of employees, they in turn will not have money to put BACK into our community.

If your health care costs went up 10-15% every year, and you had to pay that out of your own pay check, would you still be against a universal health care system?

Is there any way to bring money from the dedicated funds to the general, even if it involves changing laws?

Please conduct an efficiency audit to determine where waste is occurring and reduce labor costs.

What makes you think deflating the county is good for the long term?

What opportunities exist for Cities and the County to centralize services. I am not assuming that King county is always the centralization point- maybe the city of Redmond or Bellevue, for example.

What's the problem with raising taxes? They provide vital funding for programs, so why oppose?

When the decision time comes, how do you make that final recommendation and live with the results that you know will happen today and in the future?

When will you actually start acting like representatives of the public instead of herders?

Why are some division heads allowed to hire their friends, and base promotions on those friendships, country of birth and color of one's skin?

Why are we not utilizing our other cities and students for help?

Why are you afraid of the unions?

Why aren't more departments accountable? Where is the extended planning process so that deferrals or decisions can be made when a certain situation arises, such as recession?

Why aren't you looking into becoming a right-to-work entity?

Why can't we talk about ways to get more people in society truly motivated to take responsibility for their own actions and children rather than continue to make the conversation about choosing between more taxes or fewer services? You're missing the point and those of us you're taxing are paying for it.

Why can't you make the tough decisions to cut personnel and services to balance the budget - especially police and fire?

Why do you think more govt is the answer?

Why does King County spend hundreds of dollars more per employee for their health insurance benefits than the City of Seattle or any other comparable government in WA?

Why is County government so inefficient?

Why is the county wasting money on ferry service to Vashon Island which competes with state provided service? If any of the county funded runs do not meet at least 50% fare box recovery of operating costs, cut them.

Why is total compensation on average double what the private sector provides and how could you approve that.

Why not renegotiate union contracts?

District 4

What else can fix the budget?

(1) Increase volunteerism with 1/2 pay above a certain # of hours (2) Establish a chain-gang system for offenders to work off their debt to society at 1/2 pay too above actual # of hours.

A more even pay grade.

Commence Community Weaving King Co. to weave people together and empower them to help one another.

Creative thinking -- charge for property assessment.

Cut at the top - management, admin and executive level

Cut labor cost by NEED not across the board

Decrease departmental waste. Stop spending every penny you have when you don't need to, just so you can justify a larger budget next year.

Deeper re-thinking of approach to justice or public safety

Eliminate public employee unions

I don't think that most solutions presented will be effective.

Income Tax

Increasing efficiency may also mean cutting labor costs

Kill RFA and raise cash fares

Legalize marijuana and tax it.

Legalize marijuana...tax it, control it, solve budget problem.

More efficiency will ultimately lead to less labor costs.

none of the above more taxes

Priority led budgeting

Privatize some services

Trim (not cut completely) some personnel benefits

Use CAFR monies now invested!

.01 sales tax in King County -- Offer early retirement to employees

1) Propose 10% pay cut + three year pay freeze to unions 2) Proportionate layoffs to unions that don't accept proposal

As lame as it sounds, relaxing structures on how employees can serve the county might help KC get more work for less money.

Audit job responsibilities to eliminate based on unnecessary functions.

Consider combining programs where possible. Allow Universities, Cities, and the State to take over certain programs. Consider mothballing certain programs that are useful but unfunded as priorities become clear.

Continuing to not increase taxes.

Create a sliding scale system so that users of specific services pay a small portion of the cost, i.e. library services

Creative revenue generation (if it can be directed to general fund): - selling reclaimed water; - timber or forest product harvest; - park fees

Cut courts by 1/2 to 2/3 and institute with citizens of the Amendments and Common Law Courts as demanded by the 1878 Constitution of Washington State to be fully funded. This will also reduce police and court staff by 1/2.

Cutting wasteful or redundant county spending

Easy to fix 2011 deficit. It's hard to keep people happy and find sound, long term solutions.

Employee pay freeze

Enable King Co. residents to self-organize and fund their creative ideas to build resiliency back into community. Community Weaving is a cost effective approach to enable this process.

Find a few non discretionary items that can be put to a vote to reduce so funds can be re-allocated to general.

Foster micro-industries that correlate to areas where services are being cut (dog collars -> animal control)

Graduate Income Tax

I don't think there is a silver bullet in any one action. All of them or any combination of them could work- but I see no evidence presented here to choose one over another.

Income Tax

income tax, please

increase charges to certain services provided to for profit businesses and high income individuals

increase use fees

Increased set a tax percentage on income so both the rich/poor to do the equal share.

Institute a countywide income tax

It must be a combination of everything, not one thing. Perhaps County Government should be eliminated altogether and services to be delivered by other agencies--SPU, Sound Transit, PS Regional Council, etc.

Legalize Marijuana

Locate and use the monies in the CAFR currently used for institutional investments; ignore the supposed debt; make the corporations pay their fair share of taxes and help create a state bank, as in North Dakota, where there has never been a depression!

Make Public Employee Unions illegal (civil servants should give up the right to collective bargaining)

Metro should be more like in Washington, D.C. cards which cost how far you go. No paper transfers and cash machines on bus.

Must be a combination of all

Need to create a more diverse and substantive revenue stream to provide more/better services regardless of economy

Nothing is across the board - we NEED services, but not so many bureaucrats.

Pare back on managers & cut managers salaries. Too many chiefs at too great a cost.

People at the top should be taking salary freezes or cuts just like large corporations.

Perhaps if the state moves from a sales tax to an income tax, allowing for more consistency.

Privately funded community development programs with tax cuts with those involved or giving time, ex. homeless shelters.

Provide police with smaller, more economic cars -- have them shut them off when stationary.

Put volunteers to work to keep community services going -- libraries, community centers, parks -- also services as job training.

Reduce the Executive's salary

Reduce the size of emergency services and eliminate (temp) any unrequired items

Sell administrative offices, lease back from new owner, and allow/encourage flextime and telework.

Still all focus on cuts is to frontline workers - no focus on high-level management reductions.

Stop wasting money on crime prevention that does not have to do with safety. Safety is the priority, not anything else.

Turn the lights off, quit changing logos and letterhead, reduce - reuse- recycle; lower the high wage earners salary to a more acceptable wage that is comparable to others. Even out the salaries.

Volunteers

If you could ask county decision-makers one question, what would it be?

1. Find ways to structure compensation, benefits and retirement programs for employees that reflect the largely riskless position government workers experience. 2. Salary employees vs. hourly, eliminate vacation payout and sick leave payouts in cash, reduce benefits 2. Demand stronger work ethic and our commitment from employees without overtime 3. Set higher performance standards fire low performers

Are you willing to risk your political careers (or support the cause for the non-elected decision makers) to eliminate the ability for civil servants to participate in collective bargaining arrangements?

Can we ask the very wealthy among us to pay an additional amount in the short term?

Can you impose vice taxes?

Can you take a pay cut whenever you cut someone else's pay?

Does the Executive and the County Council believe these Countywide Community Forums to be worth supporting with taxpayer dollars instead of the relying on donations from business and individuals? Change the law and support this program.

Does the Executive and the County Council believe these Countywide Community Forums to be worth supporting with taxpayer dollars instead of the relying on donations from business and individuals? Change the law and support this program.

During more prosperous years, was consideration given to making programs such as health and human services sustainable? For example, welfare to work programs and sliding scale for services?

Follow the 1878 Constitution: illegal immigrants should be deported.

Free health care for poor people.

Give me the cost benefit analysis of each service if you want me to help you make decisions on what needs to be cut. Otherwise, this is all just politicking.

Graduate Income Tax

Have we reached a point where everything we have left (programs) is "essential?" If so, how could we do anything but tax to make up for it?

How about changing value from "present current level of sources" to "sharply reduce size of govt"

How are taxes affecting struggling lower class?

How can King County residents advocate for change in tax structure

How can you - with a clear conscience - zero out all funding for social and human services, and yet bolster the Office of Emergency Management's funding 2.1%?

How did you not see even some of this coming? Why was there not a cushion built up in more prosperous times?

How do you propose to pay for all the people who will be forced to steal for basic necessities without social services, when they fill our prisons?

How does the non-discretionary side affect expectations of the discretionary side? The source of revenue seems like a building or wall ("This 87% is safe--we will not touch it"). Examine *all* services, regardless of how they are funded, as worthy of or unfit for the future. Think about releasing yourself from mandates *and* funding sources.

How much does my voice matter? In other words, where do my answers go, how do they affect your decisions?

How much money did you make over the last 10 years compared to the average county resident?

How much money do you give back to the community from your wages? How much are you willing to personally sacrifice to stay in your position?

How satisfied with the current county tax system are you? How realistic is it to pursue radical tax reform at the county level?

Is there a policy, a philosophical, or a legal problem that prevents the county from matching yearly or even seasonal revenues with corresponding outlays, in accordance with published priorities?

List five programs, in order of your choice, to eliminate.

Please do not let unemployment rise-- get people back to work.

Really--Why do we need county government at all?

Show the evidence that King County is more efficient than other large urban counties

Simply reducing or eliminating future COLA for employees is not enough. Many private companies have reduced existing salaries back to rates from 2005 or 2006, have reduced or eliminated benefits, and have increased employee costs for health benefits (increased premiums and copays and reduced coverage). Why can't we do the same with King County employees?

Some of these programs mentioned sound like they should have federal, state or grant funding - have those sources been sought?

Was this foreseeable or is it strictly because the banking system tanked??

What % of money is spent on actual physical service delivery? Not planning, not strategies, not oversight, not supervision, not monitoring, but physical services delivered to the door or to the community. There needs to be a cost per unit delivered metric - how can you get there?

What determines whether a service is a "county service" and do you think there are any that should fall under different jurisdiction?

What does it take to get KING County employees to live under the same restrictions as private businesses? They need to voluntarily give up a percentage of their benefits.

What is the floor on services? Financially and morally?

What is the structural gap in the budget?

What is your annual income?

What is your strategy in Olympia?

What percent of employees have reached the highest level of salary for their field? i.e have they already capped their salaries, exclusive of COLAs?

Why am I working my ass off, while I have friends who get Section 8 housing, free health insurance, food stamps -- and they are able bodied but nobody will hire them? Why can't they be background checked in order to help provide security in the schools, act as teacher's aides, clean parks, be a life guard, etc?

Why aren't you doing a comprehensive examination of the impact and possibility of widespread efficiencies, salary benefit and position cuts at the white-collar level rather than crowing at press conference after press conference about concessions made by blue-collar workers?

Why aren't you weaving people together so they can help one another and monitor themselves?

Why do we keep losing money on the RFA and pay when exiting buses?

Why is education, something that should be readily accessible to everyone, becoming financially unattainable to most?

Why is there no debate on the 87% that is fixed on the budget? Those items are dedicated partly to avoid the gov. getting too bloated in the general, but this is a structural re-set so by taking 87% off the table to discuss is crazy. Something could be reduced to offset the general.

Why not a state income tax with money filtering down to exc and city, only tax working people or over a certain income bracket. People who are still working could have a additional money taken out of check, such as was done for the Hanford Nuclear also employees do not need the wellness program, I've heard that it cost a lot.

Why on earth would you ever take this job? You should be working in the private sector!

Why would you ask tax payers to fund current or expanded programs in gov't while the taxpayer has to cut back their spending in this economy?

District 5

What else can fix the budget?

Eliminate excessive county staff, ie: those who get paid and are not really doing anything

Need to have authority to cut in the "87 % dedicated" part of the budget as well. This is a crisis and nothing should be off limits.

Promote community to pitch in where you can and provide list of ways to do it.

4 day work week, random coverage of services

Create a website where the people of King County can have a say in the budget and can express their opinions on topics

Government needs to start thinking about itself like a regular public company and not like a socialist economy.

If you ask the unions to take cuts, then I think everyone in the county who make \$50,000 or more needs to be asked to make a percentage cut in their salaries too. Example: 50-55,000-same % cut as you are asking unions, then a 2 to 3 % increase cut in every employee whose salary goes up 5,000. These are the employees who can afford these cuts, not those under \$50,000.

Look for grant monies (government; federal/private foundations) to help development (economic-capital), health services, and transportation.

Only have programs that are about the safety of the honest hard working citizens not criminals and alcoholics.

Reductions in Public Defense contract by combining into a single agency instead of the duplication that exists now. Conflicts can be handled through contractors.

Review the revenue stream so as to not be so dependent on sales tax.

Run the county like a private business and get rid of employees who are duplicating other peoples work

Strong representative government with a message.

Tax things that are not necessities such as plastic and paper bags in grocery stores, candy, tobacco, etc.

The problem comes from the federal level: the criminals that own the Federal Reserve Board = a private corporation

The state needs to restructure the tax system.

The whole budget, not just the general fund needs to be on the table during this emergency. Buses, sport stadiums, tunnels, bridges, runways while not just King County budget item have sucked the taxpayers dry. Ease up on costly rules and regulations unless there is an immediate life safety issue.

Volunteers! If you can find any, train them or interns. We've learned a lot as college students to cope with 10+ days of interning with no pay in return.

If you could ask county decision-makers one question, what would it be?

Are property holders more important or worthy than those who do not own property in the county, philosophically?

Do you ever consider the fact that many decisions hurt the senior citizens of the county and prevent the youth from growing up being able read, write and do simple math. What do you plan to do to make sure our students are educated properly? The children of the US are falling daily in their ability to compete in the world.

Does someone in county government have the will to privatize what can be, and eliminate disincentives to economic progress?

Has it ever been an option to start cutting salaries from the top down first?

How can we get the unincorporated portions of King county to be annexed by cities? It seems that these residents are getting more support and paying less for it than other county residents.

How can you in good conscience preside over the massive cuts in human services that have been made and are proposed to be made?

How did we get here? What went wrong?

How do you feel about the California model of legalizing marijuana and taxing it as a revenue generating idea?

Human services are integral to King County families, how can you even consider wiping it out completely? As stated in the video it is about protecting the core services in King County, human services provides most of those services.

Isn't it time to show by example that you want to help the county in this difficult time by asking everyone who makes over \$50,000 a year to take some type of percentage cut in their salary? The higher the salary the bigger the percentage cut.

Looking back over 20 years, what do you think the long term root cause of King County spending more money than it has is and what will you do different to prevent future overspending?

What is the most challenging aspect of getting the resources you need to fulfill the promises you made to get in office and what can the public do to help you once they have put you there?

When did the government become a charity that is to take care of the people?

Why are county employees getting pay increases to go along with already generous fringe benefits such as health coverage while private businesses and employees are suffering cuts?

Why do we spend so much time and money discussing how we should spend our time and money

Why do you play political maneuvers to outstand one another with lobbyist influence and political active groups with funding opportunities????

Why don't you think about yourselves similarly to the way a fortune 500 company would think? The principles of running a company are very sound and apply directly to what you are doing. a company however cannot just go out and demand more money from their shareholders which is what typical governments do.

Why the lack of foresight? There's always a tomorrow.

Why do you play on people's fears to increase funding for public safety? Where did the Sheriff get the idea that misdemeanor criminals move on to more serious crimes?

District 6

What else can fix the budget?

Combine increasing revenues with cutting labor costs

Cut Sheriff funding and force unincorporated King County to annex and pay equally if they want equal policing.

Cut some government salaries and instead of paying overtime, hire more workers (in reference to Sheriff's office)

Finding new ways to make revenue go for services

Give more responsibility to NGOs/Churches--rally citizens together to take responsibility for poor destitute community, so tax dollars can go to institutions we can't do on our own.

Gov't is not known for its efficiency or productivity and it would be nice if it ran more like a business and if an employee can't hack it then, they're gone

Limit public Transit, fewer road luxuries, such as HOV exits.

Lower government paychecks

Merge Metro with Sound Transit and other regional transportation entities

Prioritize program cuts based on the interests and priorities of the taxpayer. Make a better match between taxes taken in and how the taxpayer wants their resources applied.

Raising the sales tax.

Reallocate money from the General fund mainly the 76% for Criminal Justice

The solutions should definitely NOT include programs/services cuts

A county lottery-once a year. 1000 winners of a \$1,000 or 1 winner of a million.

Cut overtime

Cut the programs that the government should stay out of and that local not for profit's can help instead. The county government is getting to big.

I would be okay with higher sales tax, electricity tax, and maybe we should annex police areas.

If King County is centered around being a safe community, then it should act like one, throwing events/fairs that people attend and pay for, so it looks like everyone is involved and it will increase revenues

Increasing taxes and cutting staff aren't the only options. You have to be creative and rethink how things get done. Can't just keep tweaking the same old model of government.

It's a spending issue, not a revenue issue. Focus on labor - wage increases and benefits, plus FTE's

Just asking a department to reduce and not holding them accountable to do so is terrible management - you would be fired in the private sector! We must have ACCOUNTABILITY and TRANSPARENCY!

Legalize marijuana and tax it and higher tax on cigarettes

Never expand before the money is in the coffers. 8% debt service would go a long way toward solving the problem.

No one of these options is the answer. It will take the combination of all of them. Also: consider asking for donations to help fund human services programs - either cash or in-kind (volunteers).

Perhaps looking into technology as a way to save some \$\$; for instance webinars and skype to cut travel costs or employee hours by allowing traffic court offenders to speak to the judge by skype and other ideas like this to save man power at the courts.

REALLOCATE/REDUCE the Port of Seattle Portion of each Homeowners Property Tax bill and apply more of that to the General Fund.

Run the County like you would a personal home. If, you can't afford 'the luxuries' you don't do them.

Selective enforcement of laws. Determine which activities statistically cause the most harm and focus Law Enforcement resources there. There will always be something that cannot be covered and that is life.

Stop overtime, but increase employees.

Stop paying Sheriffs double for working overtime.

If you could ask county decision-makers one question, what would it be?

Are you willing to take a significant pay cut?

Are you willing to take salary cuts to help the budget?

Can there be more community "Town Hall meetings"?

Can we reduce the inmate population in the County jail without a big impact on safety? Reduce or eliminate sentences for some misdemeanors. Reduce the load on the criminal justice system.

Do 'decision makers' REALLY make decisions based on our priorities? Do they weigh our input and priorities more heavily than those of labor unions or their staff? Does the constitution and charter have any influence or do decisions get made based on day-to-day feel-good concerns?

Do you believe you have done every single thing, no matter how big or small, to reduce discretionary spending and support efficiencies within your control?

Do you have a plan to expand citizen participation in your district?

Have you forgotten that you are employed by the people of KC? Just because you got hired does not mean that you are above the people that hired you. Why can't you start making sensible decisions that are constitutionally based and not 'feelings' based?.

How can the Federal, State, and County system work together better, so citizens aren't paying so much for services covered by all three? E.x.) police forces for KC, state patrol, etc.

How can you eliminate greedy, self-centered public employee unions? How can you justify 20% cost of living increases over several years for your employees when the general public has seen their pay stagnate? Are you from Bell, California?

HOW Can you REDUCE the amount of the METRO SEWER CHARGE on my Monthly bill?? I pay MORE for Wastewater treatment than I do for Water USAGE!!!! (My average water/sewer bill is about \$158 \$105 of that for sewer!!!) What can you do to reduce this monthly cost?? (and control the Brightwater treatment plant fiasco)

How did King County get here and what do you think could have solved the problem and when?

How do you feel about money going towards prisons for TVs and other entertainment when that money could be going towards schools or health care?

How do you plan on decreasing the poverty rate in King County?

How much do you get paid?

How much money do you make?

How old is the chair in their office? Any duct tape holding it together?

How will you keep union labor costs from destroying your budget as has been done in California

Is there a way to incorporate a county income tax (like I-1098)?

Please consider poor people first!

Please help us get out of this faster.

What is the actual cost of the EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE - in consultant costs, dedicated employee salary/benefit costs, in county employee training time, in diversion of management focus from the REAL jobs to be done? What REALLY is the corresponding benefit? Can it be quantified? What is the point?

What is your plan to increase citizen participation in governmental policy decisions?

What services could be transitioned out of the budget and into the private sector?

What specific actions or programs have been undertaken by King County to increase effectiveness (e.g., improve productivity, reduce wasted time, energy, resources, and better align skills and interests to what needs to be done by staff?

When will marijuana be legalized?

Where do thousands of King County residents who are not employed and do not have any medical insurance, turn for preventive or urgent medical needs, in light of new budget related cuts for adult medical services across King County Public Health?

Where is the money going, and to where?

Why are your salaries so high when there are many people with tougher jobs and are paid so less?

Why can't you stay on budget? If you don't have the money, you SHOULD NOT be spending it. I have to stay on my budget, why can't you?

Why do county workers get better pay and benefits than other not-for-profit workers?

Why do you deserve a paycheck from the Public when you are obviously unable to behave as Leaders and make the required cuts to keep the County in line with the Charter?

Why does King County exist as currently drawn? Do those political boundaries make sense today? How can we change "political" boundaries into "efficiency" boundaries?

Why no zero based budgeting

Why not make the salaries, benefits and hours of gov't workers equal to private workers?

Why won't you stop spending on people who refuse to take care of themselves and people who are here illegally or are here legally but not citizens?

Why would you cut services like officers in school, especially since they help provide the feeling of safety in schools

District 7

What else can fix the budget?

Spend the money to get the service provided- not managed.

There is no single option. There has to be a combination of all these.

Cut administrative costs in the upper end of government. Govern not do direct service.

It may sound simplistic, but are we using the cheapest toilet paper possible in the jails? Are prisoners eating anything more than sustenance meals, because that is all that they require? How about cutting the overtime rate of public employees? There may be a loophole that allows employees to "make up" furlough days with double-time overtime. Government employees also enjoy higher pay and much better benefits than private sector employees, maybe we should look for more equality in those areas. How about lowering the thermostats in government buildings? Everyone I know owns a sweater, it's better for technology to stay cool and it's better for the environment to use less energy. How about making the county more business friendly? Business brings in more revenue than residents so making this a better place to do business should increase revenue. And lastly, Seattle is not the whole of King County. The city needs to be more responsible for the costs it incurs. Metro means little to those outside the city limits except empty buses spewing fumes and burning oil.

If you could ask county decision-makers one question, what would it be?

How did we get into this mess?

What talks have been conducted in the area of long term solutions to the budget problems?

Why can't these questions be answered individually instead of by category? Some programs have got to have more fat and less benefit to society than others. The thing that frustrates me the most about government is its inability to prioritize. Cut back to basics in services and give people their tax -money back and allow them to fill the gaps!

District 8

What else can fix the budget?

Legalize and tax marijuana.

Legalize marijuana and tax it.

Legalize marijuana and tax it.

Legalize marijuana and tax it.

Legalize marijuana.

Make public transportation more efficient, stop unnecessary building projects.

Roll back to previous annual budget that is in balance.

Stop all funding of anything except what is required by law and then only fund public safety.

Stop making electronic road signs.

Won't we need to do all of these?

Get out of the ferry business. Stop funding any registered non-profit group that asks gov't for money.

Legalization and taxation of marijuana.

Legalize and tax marijuana.

Legalize Marijuana

Legalize marijuana

Legalize marijuana

Legalize Marijuana

Legalize marijuana and tax it.

LIFO - Last In First Out. Remove budget increases in order as they were added until equilibrium is achieved.

Mandate a given reduction in EVERY department, even those with dedicated funding-general fund not the only place cuts should be made. Seems like a lot of cost growth slips below the radar.

Mandatory 1 day a week servicing public needs, working on a farm, processing food, or assisting at a health-care facility.

Require KC employees to pay more for their healthcare benefits. I have to pay \$360/month as my share of my insurance with my employer picking up the rest. KC employees can certainly pay their fair share.

So-called zero-based budgeting, with a really strong community participation process included

Stop making electronic road signs that tell us how long it will take to get somewhere.

Tax increases will hurt the King County economy and extend the budget crisis.

The dedicated fund MUST be open to examination and adjustment. What good is increasing efficiency on 13% of the budget when the remaining amount stays closed to review?

There is not one thing that can be done to change this huge deficit, but if everyone can contribute or give up something then possibly thing may change for the better.

We have to stay away from the regressive sales tax as a way to increase revenue. We need a state income tax but it should lower sales tax instead of property tax. Sales tax hits the poor much more.

You can't keep throwing \$\$\$ at problems by continuing to tax...tough it out, like the rest of us have to.

If you could ask county decision-makers one question, what would it be?

Central executive staff grew significantly under the last administration. Though this executive has cut some, given the county's financial condition, what more can be done to reduce highly paid administrative staff in all branches of county government? These are not related to service provided citizens. Thank you for adding a number of technical innovations too like this survey!

How about mandatory retirement for all KC employees eligible to retire now...(no more staying on to build bigger and bigger retirement funds...)

How can the voting public be convinced to vote to raise taxes to provide the resources to reinstate human services, sheriff staffing, courts and prosecutor and program to lower recidivism?

How can we have COLA and pay raises for some county employees when so many are out of work? Government employees must share the pain

How is our system sustainable?

I don't understand neighborhood "beautification" funds. I feel that those funds could better be used towards the budget shortfall. I feel that neighborhoods benefit from it, sure, but in these times it just doesn't make sense. I would ask why not eliminate this funding-at least until economy recovers?

On what basis was the budget originally based? Why didn't anyone see this coming?

People are already struggling to support their families fix your own mistakes, don't charge us more money that we don't have.

What can we do to reduce the burden on lower income citizens

What if you are laid off, what would you do?

What job(s) did you hold before taking this elected office?

What kind of information is used to determine pay and benefits to county employees- are they paid more or less than people who do similar jobs across the country?

Why can't we take a harder look at the so-called "dedicated" funds in an effort to reduce costs?

Why do you not invest more in vulnerable populations -- like the mentally ill, which when provided services can and DO recover and become good stewards of the public trust and investment?

Why don't you legalize marijuana?

Why don't you try to open union contracts so unions have to make concessions?

Why have you not legalized and taxed marijuana?

Why have you not legalized and taxed marijuana?

Why is KC in the ferry business?

Why shouldn't those of us who can afford to pay our public obligations first, and only after those are covered, spend for our own wants or needs?

Why won't you ask employees to pay their share of the benefits?

Why would you cut investigations in crime if you knew it would cause more crime?

District 9

What else can fix the budget?

Privatization of utilities

Re-evaluate what programs are just clutter.

We should enact a law stating that the general fund will always be 13% of the total budget, and when the revenues are not there to support it, the remainder will be charged to the dedicated funds as they certainly all benefit from the services provided by the general fund. It should be written such that the general fund can never grow to a larger %. In good years the extra can go into a rainy day fund, or pay back the dedicated funds. The money flowing into Sound Transits East Link is not a wise use of money during these times, even so, they benefit from everything the KC Sheriff is doing.

Cut healthcare benefits - if that cost has risen 58%, then that is the area that should be taken care of.

Cut the number of supervisors and increase the employee to supervisor ratio greatly.

Cuts in management salaries, but do not cut wages for those at the bottom of the totem pole. Minimum wage is not a living wage.

King County employees are paid much more than state employees doing similar work. Pay should be cut. I believe King County employees are paid full time for working 25 hours per week. They should work 40 as everyone else does.

Outsource non critical core services (i.e.) administrative services, road maintenance, etc.

Privatization of industries; legalization of marijuana; less worker/labor regulations

Productivity, efficiency and informed government is key to making wise decisions.

Streamline services for public safety & human services. Too much duplicate work is being done by employees in different departments for certain clients.

Take money that is allocated to things like community Art and take of people with those funds until the economy recovers

Try to reduce the dedicated fund mandate costs that do not reflect the state or federal standards, such as environmental and social service options. i.e. - the LEEDs buildings, percent for arts, revolving doors at the county buildings for health services in the form of inebriation, any program that is not providing our citizens with the basics of public safety, emergency services, energy/utilities or transportation

If you could ask county decision-makers one question, what would it be?

Are you utilizing your employees to create strategies to address the county budget? If so, what are they saying?

County labor costs are too high. Wages seem reasonable, but benefits costs are high. Why aren't you focusing on cutting non-wage labor costs to move beyond the annual budget crisis?

Do you think that increasing tax can be a long-term solution?

Have you looks at ALL programs in detail. If not, you should and eliminate those that are nice to have but not necessary in today's economy.

Have you opened up renegotiations for all unions or considered hiring outside the union for those that do not negotiate? (We should eliminate unionized government workers - they work against the citizens.)

Human services are very valuable, however, rather than the gov't doing these things, we should incentivize people to do so through tax deductions etc. (This applies to all Gov't) The more we take care of people, the more they feel entitled to, and expect. Entitlement will be the death of democracy. Your job is to keep democracy alive.

Should we continue to spend money on criminals that have already proven to not be of help to society?

When will you actually manage KC as though it was a business that needed to make a profit and still perform core critical services?

When your family budget doesn't quite cover food, the mortgage, heating and water bills, do you still make your monthly donation to your very favorite charity, which you care passionately about?

Why do they pander so much to the employee unions, when reasonable concessions would prevent program cuts especially in public safety?

Why do you give so much power to unions? County employees are often over paid and under worked.

Why do you not eliminate more social type programs?

Why so many speed traps if the hard crime rate is going up?

No District Affiliation

What else can fix the budget?

Combination--1) administrative streamlining 2) re-examining dedicated funding streams and 3) ceasing to prosecuting poverty/victimless crimes.

Consult with 3 economists for suggestions

a combination of cutting labor costs and unnecessary programs and services. Needle exchange? Handing out condoms? NOT necessary!

Consider the legalization of marijuana.

Look into experiences of others and restructure

King County should advocate for a progressive income tax for the state

Free up dedicated funding when possible; cut duplicated/overburdened administrative models in every nook and cranny. No more investment in "technology"--it only breeds red tape.

Hire and consult with 3 economists and implement suggestions. Increase county programs that will spur business hiring and expansion. Do not increase taxes.

Make it easier to build in king county

Replace manual business processes by automated processes.

I think it would be beneficial to mine the retired professional community for low impact and survey-type jobs. Also, mine the college community for young talent willing to work for lines on their resumes and a recommendation.

If you could ask county decision-makers one question, what would it be?

Do we really need so many public services?

What is your long-term budget plan? Meaning, for example, a 3-year look ahead.

Why continue to give raises in salary or even pay employees so much? There are qualified people looking for jobs who can replace those who are not efficient.



The following individuals or organizations are recognized for their contribution to this round of Countywide Community Forums:

Participating Citizen Councilors

Video participants:

- Executive Dow Constantine
- Budget Director Dwight Dively
- Councilmember Reagan Dunn
- Presiding Judge Bruce Hilyer
- Councilmember Julia Patterson
- Sheriff Sue Rahr
- Dominic West, News Editor at The Stranger

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