

Snohomish County Charter Review Commission

Chair Megan Dunn
Snohomish County Council
3000 Rockefeller Ave
Everett, WA, 98201

May 27, 2026

Dear Chair Dunn:

The 2026 Snohomish County Charter Review Commission has completed its analysis and deliberations concerning proposed amendments to the Snohomish County Charter. Over the past five months, the Commission studied twenty-five proposals submitted by individual commissioners and members of the public. With this letter, I am transmitting and filing with the County Council for submission to the officer in charge of holding elections, five propositions that have been proposed by the commission for presentation to the voters at the November 2026 general election.

Since January, the Commission has reviewed the existing county charter to identify updates necessary to ensure its continued relevance. This process included the study of numerous proposed amendments with the goal of strengthening the charter for 2026. The Commission hosted thirteen public meetings in Everett, Lake Stevens, Arlington, Monroe, and Mountlake Terrace to solicit ideas and feedback from communities throughout the county. Additionally, the Commission conducted three public hearings to receive specific comments on the proposals forwarded to the ballot and considered all public feedback received throughout the review process.

We extend our appreciation to the county staff, commission coordinator, legal counsel, and all commissioners for their contributions to the final form of these amendments. In particular, we thank County Treasurer Brian Sullivan, who was instrumental in developing two of the five proposed amendments. We also thank County Council staff for their clerical assistance and for ensuring that our meetings ran smoothly. We specifically recognize Debbie Eco and Elena Lao of county staff, whose daily efforts were essential to advancing this process.

Finally, we thank Brett Gailey, who served as chair of the Commission for the majority of the charter review period. His leadership and guidance were critical to the development of these five extensively deliberated ballot propositions.

We look forward to continuing our involvement in this process as these amendments are transmitted to the County Council for further deliberation. Should any questions arise, please contact me or any member of the Commission.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark James', written over a horizontal line.

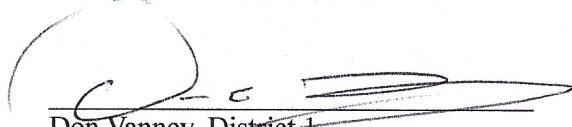
Mark James, Chair
2026 Snohomish County Charter Review Commission

The members of the 2026 Snohomish County Charter Review Commission hereby certify the following propositions to the County Council as approved May 27, 2026


Mark James, Chair, District 1


Janelle Cass, Vice Chair, District 3

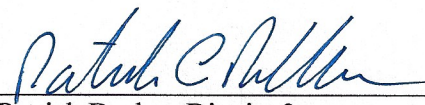

Rob Toyer, District 1

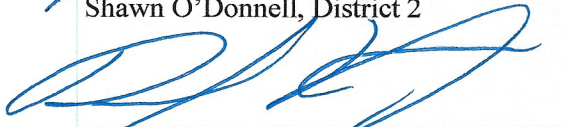

Don Vanney, District 1

Demi Chatters, District 2

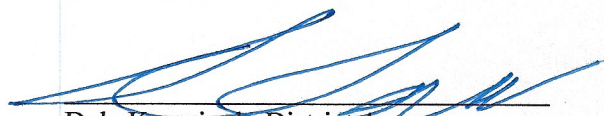
Jennifer Gregerson, District 2

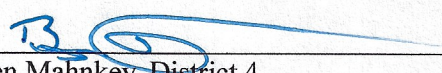

Shawn O'Donnell, District 2

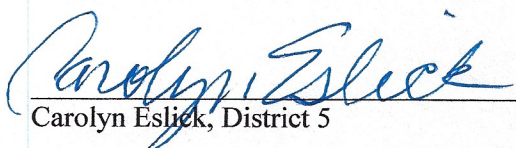

Patrick Decker, District 3


David Preston, District 3

Amanda Dodd, District 4


Dale Kaemingk, District 4

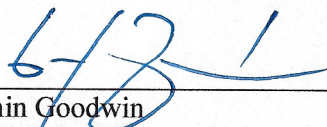

Ben Mahnkey, District 4


Carolyn Eslick, District 5

Robin McGee, District 5


Steve Ewing, District 5

Approved as to Form:


Benjamin Goodwin
Thompson, Guildner & Associates Inc. P.S.
Legal Counsel to the Snohomish County Charter Review Commission

PROPOSITION NO. 1

Adoption of a Foundational Government Services Policy

A. Proposed Ballot Title:

The Snohomish County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the county charter concerning a policy to provide for, and sustain, core public services. This proposition would require the county legislature and executive branch to prioritize and protect funding for the offices of county Assessor, Auditor, Clerk, Executive, Prosecuting Attorney, Sheriff, Treasurer, and the District and Superior Court Judges. This proposition would add a new section to Article 6 of the County Charter.

Should this proposition be enacted into law:

Yes ☐

No ☐

B. Charter Amendments Required:

AMENDED SECTIONS:

No existing sections exist in the charter

NEW SECTIONS:

Section 6.140 Foundational Government Services Policy

(A) The County shall adopt, maintain, and periodically update a Foundational Government Services Policy to promote the long-term delivery of state-mandated county services necessary to protect public safety, public health, infrastructure, the administration of justice, and fiscal stability. The County shall adopt, maintain, and periodically update a Foundational Government Services Policy that:

1. Prioritizes the funding of state-mandated services, including but not limited to the offices of Assessor, Auditor, Clerk, Executive, Prosecuting Attorney, Sheriff, Treasurer, and District Court and Superior Court Judges
2. Prioritizes the funding and delivery of foundational services before the expansion of discretionary programs.

3. Promotes structural budget balance, and long-term fiscal sustainability.
4. Establishes policies for reserves, revenue stabilization, and financial planning.

(B) Implementation

The County Council shall, by ordinance, adopt and maintain policies necessary for the implementation of this section. The policies shall be consistent with state and county regulations on transparency of the budget.

(C) Proposed Definitions:

Foundational Government Services include but are not limited to:

- Public Safety, Prosecutor, Law Enforcement, Courts, Clerk, Corrections
- Public works and infrastructure such as roads, bridges, drainage, and capital maintenance.
- Public health and Human Services as defined in RCW and amended from time to time
- Emergency management and disaster response
- Core administrative and financial functions necessary to deliver these services required by the State Constitution and RCW.

REPEALED SECTIONS:

N/A

PROPOSITION NO. 2

Prioritize Funding of Budget Stabilization Funds

A. Proposed Ballot Title:

The Snohomish County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the county charter concerning the prioritization of the county budget stabilization funds. This proposition would require the county legislature and executive branch to prioritize the funding of the county budget stabilization funds. The purpose of these funds is to help mitigate the impacts of catastrophic economic downturns and revenue shortfalls and provide resources for emergencies and catastrophic events. This proposition would add a new section to Article 6 of the County Charter.

Should this proposition be enacted into law:

Yes ☐

No ☐

B. Charter Amendments Required:

AMENDED SECTIONS:

No existing section exists in the charter

NEW SECTIONS:

Section 6.150 Prioritization of County Budget Stabilization Fund

The County shall maintain stabilization funds to promote long-term fiscal stability and continuity of essential county services during emergencies, catastrophic events, and severe fiscal disruption.

(1) Primary Stabilization Fund

The County shall maintain a Primary Stabilization Fund for fiscal stabilization, revenue volatility, and general budget continuity. The Primary Stabilization Fund shall be administered by the County Finance Department consistent with county code, adopted financial policies, and state law.

(2) Secondary Catastrophic Stabilization Fund

The County shall maintain a separate Secondary Catastrophic Stabilization Fund for declared emergencies, catastrophic natural disasters, or severe fiscal disruption threatening the continuity of essential county services.

The Secondary Catastrophic Stabilization Fund shall:

- Be maintained separately from all other county funds,
- Be administered by the County Treasurer consistent with county investment policies and state law,
- Not be commingled with other county operating accounts, and
- Not to be funded by taxes or fees imposed or increased for the exclusive purpose of this fund.

(3) Funding Sources

The County shall adopt ordinances providing for contributions to the Secondary Catastrophic Stabilization Fund, which Shall include:

- Investment earnings from the Primary Stabilization Fund,
- One-time or extraordinary revenues,
- Emergency reimbursements,
- Dedicated revenue sources, and
- Other funding sources established by ordinance.

(4) Authorized Uses

Funds from the Secondary Catastrophic Stabilization Fund may be used only for:

- Declared emergencies,
- Catastrophic events,
- Natural disaster response and recovery,
- Severe fiscal disruption, or continuity of foundational government services.

The fund shall not be used for routine structural budget balancing absent a declared emergency.

(5) Supermajority Requirement

Appropriation or expenditure from either stabilization fund shall require approval by at least four members of the County Council or a super majority should the county council change membership .

(6) Replenishment

Any withdrawal from the Secondary Catastrophic Stabilization Fund shall include a replenishment plan. Any federal or state reimbursements associated with emergency expenditures shall be returned to the applicable stabilization fund whenever legally permissible.

(7) Transparency and Reporting

The County Treasurer shall provide an annual public report regarding the Secondary Catastrophic Stabilization Fund, including:

- Fund balance,
- Investment performance,
- Contributions and withdrawals,
- Policy compliance, and
- Long-term projections of fund adequacy.

(8) Capitalization of the Secondary Fund

Upon establishment of the Secondary Catastrophic Stabilization Fund, the County shall transfer an amount equal to ten percent (10%) of the balance of the Primary Stabilization Fund into the Secondary Catastrophic Stabilization Fund for the purpose of initial capitalization and long-term catastrophic reserve stability.

REPEALED SECTIONS:

N/A

PROPOSITION NO. 3

Converting All Elected County Offices to Non-partisan Offices

A. Proposed Ballot Title:

The Snohomish County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the county charter concerning non-partisanship in all elected county offices. This proposition would require that all candidates for a Snohomish County elected office appear on the ballot without a political party designation and that all elected county offices be non-partisan offices. This proposition would amend Section 4.15 and Section 4.80 of the County Charter.

Should this proposition be enacted into law:

Yes ☐

No ☐

B. Charter Amendments Required:

AMENDED SECTIONS:

Section 4.15 Non-partisan Offices

~~The offices of county treasurer, county auditor, county assessor, county sheriff, and county clerk shall be non-partisan offices. All County elected~~
offices shall be non-partisan offices.

Section 4.80 Vacancies

An elective office shall become vacant on the death, resignation or recall of the official or if the official ceases being a resident of Snohomish county or is absent from the county for thirty consecutive days without being excused by the council. ~~The council shall fill a vacancy from a list of three people submitted by the county central committee of the party which the official in office immediately prior to the vacancy represented. In the event that the official in office immediately prior to the vacancy was a non-partisan candidate, t~~ The vacancy shall be filled by the council.

Vacancies in elective office shall be filled at the next November general election, unless the vacancy occurs after the last day for filing declarations of candidacy, in which case the vacancy shall be filled at the next succeeding November general election. The person elected shall take office upon certification of the results of the election and shall serve the unexpired term of the vacated office.

Until a successor has been elected and certified, a majority of the council shall fill the vacancy by appointment. All persons appointed to fill vacancies shall meet the qualifications for office set forth in this charter.

NEW SECTIONS:

Section 11.090 Terms of Office – County Councilmembers and Executive

Notwithstanding any other provision of this charter, the terms of office of county councilmembers and county executive shall be as set out in this section, according to the following contingencies:

1. If Proposition No. 3 providing for conversion of all county elected offices to non-partisan offices is approved by a majority of voters in the 2026 general election, then: (a) candidates for county councilmember representing districts two and three and candidates for county executive in 2027 shall appear on the ballot without a political party designation and those offices will be considered non-partisan; and (b) candidates for county councilmember representing districts one, four, and five in 2029 shall appear on the ballot without a political party designation and those offices will be considered non-partisan.
2. If Proposition No. 3, providing for the conversion of all county elected offices to non-partisan offices is approved by a majority of voters in the 2026 general election, then candidates for County Prosecuting Attorney in the 2030 general election shall appear on the ballot without a political party designation and this office will be considered non-partisan.

Section 11.130 Effective Dates

All changes proposed by the 2026 Charter Review Commission and approved by a majority of voters in the 2026 general election shall take effect as provided in Section 8.50 or in this article.

Section 11.140 Expiration

Sections 11.090 and 11.130 shall expire on January 1, 2030, and shall not appear in the publication of this charter after that date.

REPEALED SECTIONS:

N/A

PROPOSITION NO. 4

Increasing Public Access to County Financial Transparency

A. Proposed Ballot Title:

The Snohomish County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the county charter concerning the availability of public access to county financial information. This proposition would add a new section to Article 6 of the Snohomish County Charter. This proposition requires Snohomish County to make available, where reasonably practicable through existing systems or future modernization efforts, all financial information legally available within the county.

Should this proposition be enacted into law:

Yes ☐

No ☐

B. Charter Amendments Required:

AMENDED SECTIONS:

No existing Sections in this charter

NEW SECTIONS:

Section 6.130 County Financial Transparency

Snohomish County shall maintain publicly accessible, searchable and downloadable financial transparency tools utilizing, to the greatest extent practicable, information already collected through the County's budgeting, procurement, contracting, grant administration, financial management, and auditing processes. This section shall apply to agreements which county-administered funds are distributed to entities.

The County shall make available, where reasonably practicable through existing systems or future modernization efforts, information including the purpose or scope of funded activities, funding amounts and expenditures, recipient names and locations, agreement terms, administering departments or agencies, associated county fund or budget line item, and county-performed audits, monitoring reports,

reviews, or oversight findings when legally permissible. Information shall be presented in a manner that is searchable and accessible to the public without fee. Implementation of this section shall prioritize the use of existing systems and processes, avoid unnecessary duplication of reporting requirements, minimize administrative burden on contractors and funding recipients, and allow phased implementation as county financial and technology systems are modernized or replaced.

REPEALED SECTIONS:

N/A

PROPOSITION NO. 5

Requiring a 4/5 Supermajority Council Vote to Increase Taxes

A. Proposed Ballot Title:

The Snohomish County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the county charter concerning the approval of tax increases by the County Council. This proposition would require a 4/5 supermajority council vote to assess, levy, or increase any councilmanic tax. This proposition would amend Section 2.20 of the County Charter.

Should this proposition be enacted into law:

Yes ☐

No ☐

B. Charter Amendments Required:

AMENDED SECTIONS: 2.20 Powers

All powers of the county, not reserved by the people or vested in specific offices by this charter, shall be vested in the county council. The county council shall exercise its legislative power by adoption and enactment of ordinances, resolutions and motions. It shall have the power:

1. To levy taxes, appropriate revenue and adopt budgets for the county; provided that after January 1, 2027, any new councilmanic tax may be assessed, levied or increased only by a 4/5 supermajority affirmative vote of the Council. For purposes of this section, "new councilmanic tax" means a tax for which the county council has the authority to levy but has not or is granted to the county council after January 1, 2027. A councilmanic tax does not include fees, rates and charges, or special assessments. This section does not apply to existing councilmanic taxes levied by the county council as of January 1, 2027, or any renewal or reauthorization of those taxes that does not increase the tax rate.

2. To establish the compensation to be paid to all county officials and employees and to provide for the reimbursement of expenses, except as provided in Section 6.120;

3. Except as otherwise provided for herein, to establish by ordinance executive departments and to establish their powers and responsibilities;

4. To adopt by ordinance zoning regulations and other land use and development regulations, including improvement plans for the present and future development of the

county;

5. To employ legal counsel as allowed by the laws of the state of Washington;
6. To confirm or reject without cause nominations of members of all county boards and commissions, provided, the county council shall have concurrent authority with the county executive to nominate members of the Snohomish county planning commission;
7. To approve contracts or establish by ordinance methods by which any type of contract shall be approved;
8. To set collective bargaining guidelines to be followed by the county executive and to approve any and all collective bargaining agreements negotiated by the county executive.

The enumeration of particular powers shall not be construed as limiting the powers of the county council.

NEW SECTIONS:

N/A

REPEALED SECTIONS:

N/A