



Seattle City Council

August 4, 2014

Honorable Ed Murray
Mayor
City of Seattle
600 4th Avenue, Floor 7
Seattle, WA 98104

Subject: Council 2015-2016 Biennium Budget Priorities

Dear Mayor Murray:

As we move toward this year's fall budget process, we are fortunate that recovery from the great recession has been sustained for several years. However, we understand the overall growth in General Subfund revenues remains relatively weak. Due to cost drivers such as retirement and health care, City expenditures are expected to result in a shortfall of \$25 million in both 2015 and 2016. While it is likely that we can achieve a balanced budget through underspending rather than actual cuts, this approach does not allow for net budget additions. Consequently, we will have to identify opportunities for reprioritizing existing resources in order to fund new and/or emerging needs. In this context, the Council wanted to take this opportunity to clearly articulate our priorities for the 2015-2016 biennium.

The Council believes that the City must continue to protect the health, safety and mobility of all Seattle residents, while at the same time providing assistance to the most needy among us. Therefore, Human Services and Public Safety (Fire and Police Services), and Transportation are the Council's highest priorities for 2015-2016. We request that you maintain funding for important existing direct services and avoid reductions in such services. Program expansion that occurs either at the expense of direct human services, public safety, or transportation will be unacceptable to this Council. In particular, the Council reaffirms its support for implementation of the Police Department efforts to meet the terms of the Department of Justice Settlement Agreement. The Council looks forward to a thorough and robust conversation about transportation funding as a part of the 2015-2016 budget deliberations. In addition, we remain committed to studying the creation of a Paid Parental Leave policy for City employees and how to fund such a plan.

To successfully balance the financial demands we now face, improvements in the efficiency of service delivery must be a significant element of the City's overall budget strategy. We look forward to, and will strongly support, proposals that reduce operational costs while limiting the impact on the delivery of direct services. We anticipate revenue enhancements will be part of your biennial budget proposal. The Council is thus prepared to consider proposals for increases in user fees, fines and other revenues.

Finally, we support a budget that emphasizes the use of data analysis and evidence-based best practices that will enable us to maximize our limited resources and produce more positive outcomes for our city and its residents.

In this post-recession time, we will need to strategically invest in initiatives that improve liveability in our neighborhoods and increase economic opportunity for all. We look forward to working with you in the coming months on the development and adoption of the 2015-2016 budget.

Sincerely,



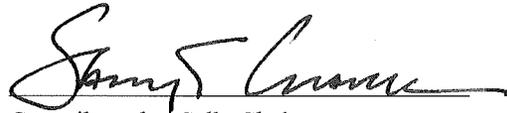
Council President Tim Burgess



Councilmember Nick Licata, Budget Committee Chair



Councilmember Sally Bagshaw



Councilmember Sally Clark



Councilmember Jean Godden



Councilmember Bruce A. Harrell



Councilmember Mike O'Brien



Councilmember Tom Rasmussen



Councilmember Kshama Sawant

cc: Ben Noble, Director City Budget Office
Kirstan Arestad, Director Central Staff