



Sonya Kraski
County Clerk

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To: Stephanie Wright, Council Chair
Brian Sullivan, Council Vice-Chair
John Koster, Councilmember
Dave Gossett, Councilmember
Dave Somers, Councilmember

From: Sonya Kraski, County Clerk

Date: November 1, 2013

RE: 2014 Budget

The purpose of this memorandum is to reiterate the importance of including monies in the 2014 budget for the management initiated reclassification I submitted to Human Resources on November 19, 2012. While I kept this year's budget presentation to the Council very brief, in retrospect I realize that I should have highlighted my two primary concerns: 1) The potential liability in the event of loss of senior, highly-trained Clerk's Office staff; and 2) The extreme disparity in pay between Clerk's Office staff and their counterparts in other general fund departments of Snohomish County government.

Since the Executive released his budget with no reclassification funding for my office, two staff have transferred to other jobs within Snohomish County government because their new positions pay more. I am very concerned that if budgetary relief is not forthcoming the Clerk's Office will lose additional staff due to the longstanding financial inequities. The majority of Clerk's Office staff earns \$11,000 - \$14,000 less than other comparable jobs within Snohomish County government as I detailed at length in the reclassification.

Potential Liability

If Clerk's Office staff could be trained in a matter of just a few months, I wouldn't be as concerned; however, the Clerk's Office handles very complicated matters and staffs' skills and on-the-job knowledge is imperative for the success of the Superior Court and my office. Following are only a few examples of situations which could bring liability to Snohomish County if my staff were to make an error:

Issuing Warrants of Arrest: While the judge in the courtroom signs the court order directing the issuance of an arrest warrant, it is my staff who actually issues the warrant. If a warrant is incorrectly issued, the wrong person could be arrested and/or the appropriate person would not be apprehended, causing risk to the community.

Handling of Sealed Search Warrants/Wire Taps: The Clerk's Office ensures the security of sealed search warrants. If a warrant is mistakenly released to the media or member of the public during the course of an ongoing investigation, it puts the investigating law enforcement officers in danger.

Firearm Rights Revocation: My staff is responsible for reviewing and forwarding the necessary court orders to the Department of Licensing so that convicted felons and individuals who have been deemed mentally incompetent are unable to legally purchase firearms. We need only to look across the nation at the shooting tragedies as an example of what could happen if this were not done correctly.

From a risk perspective, I would think it would be far better to pay a known, fair amount for well-qualified staff than gamble on potential liability caused by losing senior, trained employees.

Parity in Pay and Moving Forward

It has been approximately 15 years since the Clerk’s job classifications have been reviewed extensively and reclassified. Since that time the jobs have changed tremendously. Secondly, within the Clerk’s Office “line” staff job classifications are at different pay ranges, making it difficult for management to institute cross-training absent paying out-of-class pay or, for that matter, requiring cross-training across divisions. These silos pose challenges in moving forward with my plan of a more integrated and efficient office. Thirdly, as part of a statewide project, Superior Court and the Clerk’s Office will be rolling out a new case management system. This system will bring new efficiencies, and we will rely heavily upon the historical knowledge of our staff for successful implementation. The Clerk’s Office stands to lose seasoned employees because they could work in the Auditor’s Office for \$11,000 more or the Hearing Examiner’s Office for \$26,000 more, even though their work is at comparable skills levels and, in some instances, exceeds the skill level.

“Jane”, a full-time 15-year Clerk’s Office employee, was gracious enough to share her personal budget with me; she is a single mom who receives no child support. As you can see from the below information, “Jane’s” monthly disposable income is barely over \$100.

<u>Deductions</u>		<u>Monthly Living Expenses</u>	
Federal Tax	\$411.74	Rent	\$700.00
FICA	\$228.30	Gas	\$80.00
Medicare	\$53.39	Daycare	\$400.00
Workers Comp	\$6.82	Kindergarten	\$250.00
Pers 2	\$181.18	School Lunches	\$60.00
Union Dues	\$20.00	Groceries	\$450.00
AFLAC	\$30.40	Parking	\$50.00
DV Charity	\$2.00	Utilities	\$284.89
Total Deductions	\$933.83	Student Loan	\$136.00
		Car Insurance	\$68.86
		Total Living Expenses	\$2,479.75
Gross Monthly Wage	\$3,520.19		
minus Deductions & Expenses	\$3,413.58		
Disposable income =	\$106.61		

This type of inequity is outrageous and all of us who are County Officials should be ashamed. The Clerk’s Office is successful because of the continued goodwill of long-term, faithful employees. I am very concerned about the ramifications if these employees leave. I truly hope that you will consider funding the reclassification. I remain committed to 1) Taking any reasonable steps to ensure the Clerk’s Office budget will continue to be managed in such a manner that this reclassification would not be an onerous burden on the County’s finances; and 2) Discussing alternate scenarios to find a solution that benefits all and allows my office to continue providing excellent service to the citizens.