



## **City of Kelso 2016 Legislative Agenda**

*(Adopted 12/1/2015)*

### **Minor Road Reservoir Replacement**

Kelso requests \$3 million to fully fund replacement the failing Minor Road Reservoir. The Minor Road Reservoir is located above and adjacent to I-5 and consists of two 90-year-old 1 million gallon concrete tanks. Both are leaking, structurally deficient, and unfit for repair or rehabilitation. In the event of a seismic event 6.0 or greater, both tanks are at a 100% risk of failure, which would result in catastrophic damage to residents, local homes, and a church/private school. Failure would likely result in significant damage to and closure of I-5. \$1.5 million was allocated to this project in the 2015 Capital Budget, but financing the completion of this project at market rates of interest will result in significant impacts to the City's low and fixed-income ratepayers.

### **Public Works Infrastructure Funding**

During the 2015 legislative session, funding for public works infrastructure projects was essentially eliminated with defunding of the Public Works Assistance Account, including \$1.4 million to complete Yew Street Reconstruction in Kelso. The City supports efforts to create a long-term funding source for public works infrastructure.

### **Indigent Defense Standards:**

Kelso requests additional funding assistance to meet the new Supreme Court-mandated indigent defense standards. The new caseload standards significantly limit the number of cases a public defender can manage. The financial impact of the new regulations on cities' general operating funds is burdensome. Under the new requirements, Kelso's indigent defense costs increased over 60% from \$90,000 to \$145,000 annually. Fortunately, grants through the Office of Public Defense have helped offset these increases in 2015 & 2016, but the continuation of grant funding is not assured. Additional funding provided to cities by the Supreme Court in 2015 via increasing traffic fine amounts will not be sufficient to offset the additional burden. Kelso requests that the Legislature provide additional relief for the financial impact of these new caseload standards.

### **Transportation Funding**

Kelso supports regional priorities to improve vital infrastructure projects, including funding for grant programs, such as the Transportation Improvement Board and the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board. Additionally, the City supports the following projects in the City's geographic limits:

#### **West Main Street Realignment Completion**

Kelso requests \$5 million for Phase II of the West Main Street Realignment project. The West Main Street Corridor provides a direct route from SR 4 to I-5 through Kelso and improves access to SR 411. Phase II will complete the project and includes right-of-way acquisition, widening of the corridor, and intersection improvements at the SR 4 junction. This project will enhance safety and relieve congestion by offering a direct route between two major state highway facilities.

#### **Hazel Street Rail Crossing Grade Separation**

The 2015 transportation package passed by the Legislature included \$25 million for the completion of Kelso's Hazel Street Crossing grade separation between 2019 and 2023. To complete this project, an environmental assessment and permitting must be completed prior to construction. The City seeks allocation of \$900,000 to complete the environmental assessment in a timely manner; allowing construction to begin in 2019.

*The City supports the Association of Washington Cities' legislative agenda.*



# 2016 Legislative Session

## City Priorities

Washington's 281 cities and towns are where most residents live, learn, work, and play. Working together, we need to make a concerted and assertive effort to ensure every legislator knows that the state is only as strong as its cities and towns.

### Infrastructure

**Halt the diversion from critical infrastructure programs to help cities grow and prosper**

City infrastructure systems are a critical part of a larger network that serves and benefits the entire state. Diversion from programs that support basic local infrastructure means that communities cannot affordably maintain and secure new infrastructure. We need to reboot, and potentially reformulate this partnership. The state's abandonment of these programs cannot be the only option.

### Fiscal Sustainability

**Ensure sufficient and flexible revenue for essential city services**

The current method of funding city services is fundamentally broken. Many available revenue options are either constricted, restricted, or unpredictable. Cities need stable revenue streams to provide essential services such as public safety, infrastructure, and environmental protection to our growing population.

### Emergency Responsiveness

**Help cities prepare for and address impacts of natural disasters and other emergencies**

As a result of recent experiences with devastating wildfires, landslides, and other emergencies, cities need better ways to address emergency management. Examples include greater ability to coordinate response and enhance communication in emergencies, and the authority to ban fireworks sales and use during dangerous conditions.

### Public Records

**Strengthen the Public Records Act in response to changing technology and burdensome requests**

Cities support open and transparent government and continue to seek the best ways to meet this commitment. Unfortunately, there are a growing number of requestors who monopolize resources with broad, voluminous, commercially-driven, or retaliatory requests that do not provide a public benefit proportionate to the taxpayer dollars needed to fulfill these requests. Cities need additional tools to resolve conflicts outside the courtroom and the authority to charge a reasonable fee for electronic and commercial requests. We also need to address the impact changing technology has on public records.

### Human Services, Homelessness and Affordable Housing

**Enhance the provision of much needed human service programs to address issues that drive increased homelessness and public safety costs**

Cities believe that investment in the state's human services network is necessary. Greater access to mental health and substance abuse services is essential. Cities throughout the state are grappling with affordable housing shortages and homelessness. Together with the state, counties, and other partners, we need to develop strategies to address housing shortages and homelessness in cities of all sizes and locations.

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