



## Skagit County - Government Relations Report March 14, 2021

Of the approximately 1,100 bills introduced, approximately 415 remain under consideration. The House of Representatives and the Senate has shifted from approving bills on the floor, to meeting in committees holding public hearings and voting on bills that the opposite chamber approved. Bills need to pass out of their respective policy committees by March 26 to continue to advance through the legislative process.

On March 17, the Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council is meeting to discuss the March revenue forecast. The forecast is anticipated to reflect higher actual and anticipated revenue collections than the previous November forecast. The Senate was anticipated to release its proposed budgets shortly after the release of the revenue forecast. However, this week President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan into law, which will provide the state with \$4.25 billion in federal funds. It may take the Legislature an additional week to release its initial operating, capital, and transportation budget proposal to reflect both the revenue forecast and the federal funds.

As previously reported, below is an outline of the deadlines for this year's legislative process:

<b>Session Cutoff Calendar</b>	
February 15, 2021	Policy Committee Deadline
February 22, 2021	Fiscal Committee Deadline
March 9, 2021	Chamber of Origin Deadline
March 26, 2021	Opposite Chamber Policy Committee Deadline
April 2, 2021	Opposite Chamber Fiscal Committee Deadline
April 11, 2021	Opposite Chamber Deadline
April 25, 2021	Session adjourns - Sine Die

We have scheduled meetings with members of the delegation for the County to connect on legislative priorities before budget proposals are released. Meetings have been scheduled with all three legislative delegations during the week of March 15<sup>th</sup>. The Commissioners and County staff will be dividing these meetings as they are available. Meetings are as follows:

- Members of the 39<sup>th</sup> LD on Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, from 11:00 – 11:15 am
  - o Commissioner Lisa Janicki, 3<sup>rd</sup> District
- Members of the 10<sup>th</sup> LD on Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, from 12:00 – 12:30 pm
  - o Commissioner Ron Wesen, 1<sup>st</sup> District
- Members of the 40<sup>th</sup> LD on Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, from 12:00 – 12:30 pm
  - o Commissioner Peter Browning, 2<sup>nd</sup> District

These meetings will provide a chance to connect with the delegation on the County's priorities, including the Morgue, Guemes Ferry, and Didg'wálich Wellness Center in the capital budget, the



County's E&T reappropriations, and the County's priority bills: House Bill 1309, regarding levy certification, and House Bill 1069, providing REET 2 flexibility.

## Legislative Priorities

### Skagit County Morgue

Skagit County is requesting \$135,000 in the capital budget for the construction of a new county morgue. This project would greatly increase caseload capacity for the County and provides regional benefit, including increased capacity for soft-tissue donation. Sen. Keith Wagoner (R- Sedro-Woolley) is sponsoring this request in the Senate and Rep. Dave Paul (D- Oak Harbor) is sponsoring the bill in the House. We have heard that capital budget proposals will be released around March 25<sup>th</sup>, following the March 17<sup>th</sup> revenue forecast.

### Didgwálič Wellness Center

Skagit County is a strong advocate for statewide and regional investments in behavioral health. The County supports the Swinomish Tribe's request for \$9 million in capital budget funding to expanding the existing didgwálič Wellness Center. The request is part of Phase III of the Wellness Center, which includes the addition of detox, emergency housing, transitional and workforce housing components. This week, Sen. Manka Dhingra (D- Redmond) featured this project on her Twitter. This bodes well for chances of the project getting funded, showing cross-jurisdictional support for this important project.

### Re-Appropriate Funds for Sedro-Woolley E&T

Skagit County received \$1.5 million in the 2017-19 biennium and \$6.6 million in the 2019-2021 biennium in funding for the Skagit County Evaluation and Treatment Center. Sen. Keith Wagoner (R- Sedro-Woolley) and Rep. Carolyn Eslick (R- Sultan) relayed that they will ensure these funding amounts are reappropriated; both legislators sit on their respective chamber's appropriations committee. The Department of Commerce will be requesting reappropriations for 2017-19 biennium capital budget projects, placing the County's 2017-19 allocation in an advantageous position to be reappropriated.

### Levy Certification Timing

Skagit County is putting forward [House Bill 1309](#), which would better align the dates by which the County must certify property tax levies and budget adoption. Currently, the County must certify property tax levies for all taxing districts before adopting the budget, making compliance impossible. Rep. Carolyn Eslick (R- Sultan) is sponsoring the proposal with Rep. Ramel (D- Bellingham) cosponsoring. The Association of County Assessors have adopted this bill as one of their top priorities for the session and will be strongly supporting the bill. The bill passed out of the House unanimously and has moved to the Senate. This week, the bill was heard in the Senate Housing and Local Government Committee. GTHGA reached out to members of the committee in advance of the hearing requesting to meet regarding the bill; however, members were unable to meet due to the bill being scheduled for the morning of March 10<sup>th</sup>, the day immediately following cutoff. We provided Sen. Liz Lovelett (D- Anacortes) talking points on the bill prior to the hearing to ensure she understood the impact of the bill. County Administrator, Trisha Logue, provided [clear and succinct testimony](#) at the hearing and no committee members had questions. The Chair indicated that she would be advancing this legislation and accordingly, the bill has been scheduled for executive session on March 16<sup>th</sup>. We are in great shape to pass this bill this session!



## ***Other Items***

### **REET 2 Flexibility**

Skagit County requests that the Legislature allows temporary authority for jurisdictions to use REET 2 revenue for affordable housing operations and maintenance. This provision is included in [House Bill 1069](#), sponsored by House Local Government Chair Rep. Gerry Pollet (D- Seattle). The bill has been amended to include limitations on the REET 2 flexibility provisions, only allowing either \$100,000 or 35% percent of REET 2 funds, whatever is greater, to be used for operations and maintenance on existing capital projects. The bill passed out of the House with a split vote along party lines and was heard this week in the Senate Housing and Local Government Committee. Commissioner Wesen testified on behalf of the bill, speaking to the County's need to respond immediately to emergency housing needs during the pandemic. You may find his testimony [here](#).

### **House Bill 5141 – Environmental Justice Bill**

Sen. Rebecca Saldana (D- Seattle) brought forward [Senate Bill 5141](#), also known as the Environmental Justice bill, which implements recommendations of the state environmental Justice Task Force, funded in the 2019-2021 budget. The bill contains language requiring DNR to complete environmental justice impact analyses on state trust lands. Analyses are at additional cost to DNR to be subtracted out of trust management accounts, which provide tax revenue to counties. The bill was amended to exempt constitutional trusts from this requirement but omitted statutory trusts, resulting in fiscal impacts to county trust revenues. Paul Jewell testified with concerns on this provision at the House Environment and Energy Committee on Friday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, asking for exemption of statutory trusts to hold counties harmless. Testimony on this bill will continue in committee Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Capital Budget Outlook**

As previously reported, the state will receive an updated revenue forecast this Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, which is rumored to surpass projections of actual and anticipated revenues. With the anticipation of robust state revenues and an infusion of \$4.25 billion in federal funding through the American Rescue Act, the capital budget is likely to be on the higher side of projections, totaling approximately \$4 billion. Budgets are expected to release around March 25<sup>th</sup> to allow budget writers additional time to account for federal funding, and accordingly, we heard from a member this week that there may be two rounds of capital budget funding to account for the influx of federal funds. Members have indicated that they have been meeting with capital budget writers to begin project prioritization.

### **COVID Relief and Recovery**

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted local governments and the communities they serve. Funding provided to counties for COVID-19 response is used for essential programs, including local public health, emergency rental assistance, emergency homelessness assistance, and small business economic relief. Skagit County requests that the Legislature continue to provide sufficient funding to maintain COVID-19 response and other essential county functions.

### ***Public Health Restructure Proposal***

Democrats are advancing the Governor-request public health restructuring bill: legislative vehicle [House Bill 1152](#), sponsored by Rep. Marcus Riccelli (D- Spokane) and sponsored in the Senate by Sen. June Robinson (D- Everett). [House Bill 1152](#) was introduced as Governor-request legislation establishing regionalized, state-administrated comprehensive public health districts. The underlying bill eliminated local public health jurisdictions and gave the state oversight over the newly formed



regional comprehensive public health districts. This bill has undergone many changes as local public health proponents and the bill sponsors negotiate. Before the first floor cutoff, a significantly altered version of the bill passed the House 56-41 largely along party lines, though some Republicans voted in favor of the bill. In its current form, the bill has been significantly stripped back to minimize changes to local public health operations; however, certain elements of the current language continue to be problematic for counties, particularly changes to local board of health composition, and WSAC has taken a position to continue work to refine the bill. Additionally, it is unknown what changes will be made in the Senate.

As previously reported, the current version of the bill has three main components: establishing the Public Health Advisory Board and Foundational Public Health Services Steering Committee (to recommend, monitor, and implement public health policy), changes to local board of health composition (to provide local board of health “accountability”) and creation of Regional Comprehensive Public Health District Centers (to support and coordinate shared services between counties). Unlike previous versions of the bill, public health oversight and decision-making authority is retained locally. Local board of health composition has been changed to allow equal number of elected officials and non-elected officials rather than a non-elected majority. Counties with a population over 800,000 are exempt from local board of health changes. Finally, the bill was amended to include a null-and-void clause requiring at least \$60 million for FPHS by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 for provisions establishing Regional Service Centers.

Individual counties continue to push back on this bill, despite changes. Concerns lie primarily around the timing of the bill, funding diversion, and local preemption. WSAC has identified five main concerns with the proposal to continue negotiations:

- The timing of this proposal places significant strain on an overworked system.
- Funding, not structure, remains the primary issue with foundational public health service administration.
- Change to service delivery models requires thorough analysis and time for system stabilization and transformation. This should be done through a post-pandemic action report.
- Changes to local boards of health are concerning and contradict the Governor’s previous restriction on changes to local health district composition during the pandemic.
- FPHS funding dedicated to shared services should not be statutorily defined and should remain flexible to respond to need.

The bill has not yet been scheduled for a hearing in the Senate. While Sen. Robinson is committed to passing this legislation, it is unclear if there is support for these changes among other Senate Democrats. We anticipate further clarification on the path forward for this bill in the upcoming weeks.

### *Funding Proposals*

Foundational Public Health Funding proposals have still not moved, including the covered lives assessment introduced in conjunction with House Bill 1152, [Senate Bill 5149](#), sponsored by Sen. June Robinson (D- Everett). If the restructuring proposal advances as currently written, all components except formation of Regional Service Centers will go into effect regardless of funding, including changes to local board of health composition.

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GTHGA is monitoring the following priority items on your behalf. We will provide updates on these items as legislative action occurs. We will continue to be in contact with you on legislative proposals relevant to these items.

Support Capital Budget Funding for:

- Heritage Grant Program
- Washington State Housing Trust Fund
- Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office Grants
- Brian Abbot Fish Barrier Removal Board

## Upcoming Events

### **Health & Long Term Care (Senate) - Virtual, - 3/15 @ 1:30pm**

SHB 1225 - Public Hearing - Concerning school-based health centers. (Remote testimony.)  
(Support)

### **Transportation (Senate) - Virtual, - 3/15 @ 4:00pm**

SHB 1502 - Public Hearing - Concerning the procurement and design of electric ferries by counties. (Remote testimony.) (Support)

### **Ways & Means (Senate) - Virtual, - 3/15 @ 4:00pm**

ESHB 1410 - Public Hearing - Protecting taxpayers from home foreclosure. (Remote testimony.)

### **Housing & Local Government (Senate) - Virtual, - 3/16 @ 8:00am**

ESHB 1070 - Exec Session - Modifying allowed uses of local tax revenue for affordable housing and related services to include the acquisition and construction of affordable housing and facilities.

E2SHB 1099 - Public Hearing - Improving the state's climate response through updates to the state's comprehensive planning framework. (Remote testimony.)

E2SHB 1117 - Public Hearing - Promoting salmon recovery through revisions to the state's comprehensive planning framework. (Remote testimony.)

ESHB 1241 - Public Hearing - Planning under the growth management act. (Remote testimony.)

SHB 1309 - Exec Session - Concerning the dates of certification of levies. (Support)

### **Local Government (House) - Virtual, - 3/16 @ 10:00am**

ESSB 5275 - Public Hearing - Enhancing opportunity in limited areas of more intense rural development. (Remote testimony.)

2SSB 5368 - Public Hearing - Encouraging rural economic development. (Remote testimony.)



### **Ways & Means (Senate) - Virtual, - 3/16 @ 4:00pm**

ESHB 1332 - Public Hearing - Concerning property tax deferral during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Remote testimony.)

SHB 1333 - Public Hearing - Providing an extension to the local sales and use tax for public facilities in rural counties. (Remote testimony.) (Support)

### **State Government & Elections (Senate) - Virtual, - 3/17 @ 8:00am**

ESHB 1056 - Exec Session - Concerning open public meeting notice requirements and declared emergencies.

### **Local Government (House) - Virtual, - 3/17 @ 10:00am**

ESSB 5275 - Exec Session - Enhancing opportunity in limited areas of more intense rural development.

2SSB 5368 - Exec Session - Encouraging rural economic development.

### **Housing & Local Government (Senate) - Virtual, - 3/17 @ 10:30am**

ESHB 1232 - Public Hearing - Planning for affordable housing under the growth management act. (Remote testimony.)

### **Finance (House) - Virtual, - 3/18 @ 8:00am**

HB 1362 - Public Hearing - Modifying the annual regular property tax revenue growth limit. (Remote testimony.)

### **Housing & Local Government (Senate) - Virtual, - 3/18 @ 8:00am**

E2SHB 1069 - Exec Session - Concerning local government fiscal flexibility. (Support)

### **Ways & Means (Senate) - Virtual, - 3/18 @ 4:00pm**

ESHB 1410 - Exec Session - Protecting taxpayers from home foreclosure.

### **Local Government (House) - Virtual, - 3/19 @ 8:30am**

ESSB 5275 - Exec Session - Enhancing opportunity in limited areas of more intense rural development.

2SSB 5368 - Exec Session - Encouraging rural economic development.

## **Bill Summaries**

Outlined below are relevant bills GTHGA is tracking for the County. Bills that are in the "lobbying" category are those that GTHGA is taking action to either advance or stall; bills that are marked as



“monitoring” are those that GTHGA is keeping track of but not actively lobbying. Bill lists are marked “alive” and “dead” accordingly.

**Alive – Lobbying**

<u>Bill Details</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Position</u>
<a href="#"><u>E2SHB 1069</u></a> <b>Local gov fiscal flexibility</b> Concerning local government fiscal flexibility.	S Housing & Local	Pollet	Support
<a href="#"><u>E2SHB 1152 (SB 5173)</u></a> <b>Comp health districts</b> Supporting measures to create comprehensive public health districts.	S Health & Long T	Riccelli	Concerns
<a href="#"><u>SHB 1225</u></a> <b>School-based health centers</b> Concerning school-based health centers.	S Health & Long T	Stonier	Support
<a href="#"><u>SHB 1309</u></a> <b>Levy certification dates</b> Concerning the dates of certification of levies.	S Housing & Local	Eslick	Support
<a href="#"><u>SHB 1333</u></a> <b>Rural public facilities/tax</b> Providing an extension to the local sales and use tax for public facilities in rural counties.	S Ways & Means	Tharinger	Support
<a href="#"><u>SHB 1502</u></a> <b>Electric ferries/counties</b> Concerning the procurement and design of electric ferries by counties.	S Transportation	Pollet	Support

**Alive – Monitoring**

<u>Bill Details</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Position</u>
<a href="#"><u>ESHB 1056</u></a> <b>Public meetings/emergencies</b> Concerning open public meeting notice requirements and declared emergencies.	S State Govt & EI	Pollet	
<a href="#"><u>ESHB 1070</u></a> <b>Housing/local tax revenue</b> Modifying allowed uses of local tax revenue for affordable housing and related services to include the acquisition and construction of affordable housing and facilities.	S Housing & Local	Ryu	
<a href="#"><u>E2SHB 1099</u></a> <b>Comprehensive planning</b> Improving the state's climate response through updates to the state's comprehensive planning framework.	S Housing & Local	Duerr	



<a href="#"><u>E2SHB 1117</u></a>	<b>Comp. planning/salmon</b> Promoting salmon recovery through revisions to the state's comprehensive planning framework.	S Housing & Local	Lekanoff
<a href="#"><u>ESHB 1232</u></a>	<b>GMA/affordable housing plans</b> Planning for affordable housing under the growth management act.	S Housing & Local	Barkis
<a href="#"><u>ESHB 1241</u></a>	<b>Growth management act plans</b> Planning under the growth management act.	S Housing & Local	Duerr
<a href="#"><u>ESHB 1332</u></a> (SB 5402)	<b>Property tax deferral/COVID</b> Concerning property tax deferral during the COVID-19 pandemic.	S Ways & Means	Sullivan
<a href="#"><u>HB 1362</u></a>	<b>Property tax revenue growth</b> Modifying the annual regular property tax revenue growth limit.	H Finance	Duerr
<a href="#"><u>ESHB 1368</u></a> (SB 5344)	<b>Federal funding/COVID-19</b> Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic through state actions supported by federal funding.	C 3 L 21	Ormsby
<a href="#"><u>ESHB 1410</u></a>	<b>Home foreclosure/taxes</b> Protecting taxpayers from home foreclosure.	S Ways & Means	Volz
<a href="#"><u>SSB 5149</u></a> (HB 1201)	<b>Found. public health funding</b> Funding foundational public health services.	S Ways & Means	Robinson
<a href="#"><u>ESSB 5275</u></a>	<b>Intense rural dev. areas</b> Enhancing opportunity in limited areas of more intense rural development.	H Local Govt	Short
<a href="#"><u>2SSB 5368</u></a>	<b>Rural economic development</b> Encouraging rural economic development.	H Local Govt	Short

Dead – Lobbying

<u>Bill Details</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Position</u>
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<a href="#"><u>HB 1025</u></a> (Dead) (SB 5006)	<b>Local parks funding options</b> Concerning local parks funding options.	H Finance	Wicks	Support
<a href="#"><u>SB 5006</u></a> (Dead) (HB 1025)	<b>Local parks funding options</b> Concerning local parks funding options.	S Ways & Means	Van De Wege	Support
<b>Dead – Monitoring</b>				
<b><u>Bill Details</u></b>		<b><u>Status</u></b>	<b><u>Sponsor</u></b>	<b><u>Position</u></b>
<a href="#"><u>HB 1110</u></a> (Dead)	<b>Local boards of health</b> Concerning the composition of local boards of health.	H HC/Wellness	Riccelli	
<a href="#"><u>SHB 1157</u></a> (Dead) (SSB 5390)	<b>Housing supply</b> Increasing housing supply through the growth management act and housing density tax incentives for local governments.	H Finance	Bateman	
<a href="#"><u>HB 1201</u></a> (Dead) (SSB 5149)	<b>Found. public health funding</b> Funding foundational public health services.	H Finance	Riccelli	
<a href="#"><u>2SHB 1202</u></a> (Dead)	<b>Police misconduct/civil rem.</b> Addressing meaningful civil remedies for persons injured as a result of police misconduct, including by allowing for an award of attorney fees in addition to damages and injunctive and declaratory relief.	H Rules C	Thai	
<a href="#"><u>SHB 1298</u></a> (Dead) (SB 5221)	<b>Accessory dwelling units</b> Concerning regulation of accessory dwelling units located outside of urban growth areas.	H Rules C	Vick	
<a href="#"><u>HB 1308</u></a> (Dead)	<b>Apprenticeship utilization</b> Expanding apprenticeship utilization requirements.	H Cap Budget	Riccelli	



<a href="#"><u>HB 1337</u></a> (Dead)	<b>Accessory dwelling units</b> Concerning accessory dwelling units.	H Local Govt	Gregerson
<a href="#"><u>HB 1407</u></a> (Dead)	<b>Fees of county officers</b> Concerning fees of county officers.	H Civil R & Judi	Volz
<a href="#"><u>2SHB 1412</u></a> (Dead)	<b>Legal financial obligations</b> Concerning legal financial obligations.	H Rules R	Simmons
<a href="#"><u>HB 1414</u></a> (Dead)	<b>Marijuana licensing/zoning</b> Aligning marijuana licensing decisions by the liquor and cannabis board with local zoning ordinances.	H Commerce & Gam	Goehner
<a href="#"><u>HB 1440</u></a> (Dead)	<b>Small wireless facilities</b> Bringing innovation and investment to Washington's economy by streamlining the requirements for deployment of small wireless facilities.	H Comm & Econ De	Boehnke
<a href="#"><u>HB 1494</u></a> (Dead)	<b>Antidisplacement/prop. tax</b> Providing housing safety, security, and protection for Washington families by creating the antidisplacement property tax exemption.	H Finance	Harris-Talley
<a href="#"><u>SB 5042</u></a> (Dead)	<b>GMA actions effective date</b> Concerning the effective date of certain actions taken under the growth management act.	S 2nd Reading	Salomon
<a href="#"><u>SB 5221</u></a> (Dead) (SHB 1298)	<b>Accessory dwelling units</b> Concerning regulation of accessory dwelling units located outside of urban growth areas.	S Housing & Loca	Gildon
<a href="#"><u>SSB 5390</u></a> (Dead) (SHB 1157)	<b>Housing supply</b> Increasing housing supply through the growth management act and housing density tax incentives for local governments.	S Ways & Means	Lias
<a href="#"><u>SB 5463</u></a> (Dead)	<b>Residential prop valuation</b> Exempting a portion of the valuation of residential property from property taxation.	S Ways & Means	Wilson



[SB 5471](#)  
**(Dead)**

**Controlled subst. possession**    S Law & Justice    Padden  
Concerning knowing possession of a controlled substance.

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