



## Skagit County - Government Relations Report January 10, 2021

The 2021 Legislative Session begins on Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, and is scheduled to last 105 consecutive days and adjourn on April 25<sup>th</sup>. Uniquely, the legislative session will be conducted almost entirely virtually. Legislators plan to meet in person (masked and socially distanced) during the first week of the legislative session to change the legislative rules to accommodate a virtual format for the remainder of session.

Democrats will control the Senate 29-20 (\*one Democrat does caucus and vote often with Republicans) and in the House by 57-41. As the majority party, the Democrat Party will control the agenda in Olympia. Legislative leadership has indicated that a virtual format will result in fewer bills being introduced, considered, and passed. With that said, the number of legislative proposals seems ample and varied, with dozens of bills anticipated to advance social and criminal justice reform, anticipated [tax proposals](#) to impose a capital gains tax or a statewide payroll tax to address a shrinking revenue shortfall; competing proposals to address climate including a low carbon fuel standard, cap and trade system, a carbon tax, and more.

We are also anticipating proposed transportation revenue packages from each chamber that include some of the above climate elements, plus a gas tax; proposals responding to COVID-19 that include making dramatic investments in public health while also revising its governance; and a plethora of other policy issues including additional funding for rental and utility assistance, policy changes for affordable housing, allowing marijuana to be grown at home, and much more.

The legislative process has key deadlines that bills need to meet to remain under consideration. 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

The Legislature will begin session by meeting in committees and evaluating legislative proposals that have been [pre-filed](#) for consideration. All committee meetings will be conducted virtually. For details on how committee hearings will be conducted, click [here](#) to view the protocols for House Committees, and [here](#) for the protocols for the Senate Committees.



## Legislative Priorities

### Skagit County Morgue

Skagit County is requesting \$135,000 in the capital budget for the construction of a new county morgue. Currently, the County rents morgue space from the hospital, which lacks sufficient caseload capacity. The new morgue would be county owned and located within the Coroner's Office, rather than the hospital, adding 10 additional spaces to hold cases. The total project cost is \$428,000, matched with \$293,000 of federal and local funds. GTHGA has secured the sponsorship of Sen. Keith Wagoner (R- Sedro-Woolley) from the 39<sup>th</sup> Legislative District. Sen. Wagoner is a member of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, responsible for writing the Senate capital budget. We will work to secure a sponsor for the project in the House within the next weeks. GTHGA has passed along capital budget forms to the County to complete. Once the form is complete and we have finalized sponsorship, we will work with the legislative sponsors to submit the request form, which will ultimately pass along to capital budget leadership.

### Didgwálic 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 didgwálic 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. Total project cost is approximately \$50 million. The request this legislative session is to address the Center's most immediate need, construction of a transitional housing unit. Skagit County is joined by Island County and other regional partners in supporting this request; to assist the Swinomish Tribe in their lobbying efforts, GTHGA is crafting a letter of support for the project that we will distribute to other county partners in the region. We are in close contact with the Tribe's lobbyist and will continue to coordinate on opportunities for the County to advocate on behalf of the request.

### 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. The County broke ground on this project in the fall of 2020, but due to COVID-19 associated delays, the funding will need to be re-appropriated. The Department of Commerce will be requesting the re-appropriation of the \$6.6 million awarded in 2019-21 while the County will lead the effort to re-appropriate the \$1.5 million awarded in the 2017-19 biennium. Due to the emergent circumstances of the re-appropriation, we anticipate legislative support to re-appropriate both funding amounts. The delegation was briefed on this request twice during the interim. In conversations this week, Sen. Keith Wagoner (R- Sedro-Woolley) and Rep. Carolyn Eslick (R- Sultan) relayed to GTHGA that they would ensure these funding amounts are reappropriated; both legislators sit on their respective chamber's appropriations committees.

### Levy Certification Timing

Skagit County is putting forward a proposal that would better align the dates by which the County must certify property tax levies and budget adoption. Currently, the County must adopt the budget before certifying property tax levies for all taxing districts, making compliance impossible. Rep. Carolyn Eslick (R- Sultan) has agreed to sponsor this proposal. As the Legislature is discouraging companion bills, we will not be pursuing a Senate sponsor. GTHGA, along with Trisha Logue and



Laura Han from the County, will be meeting with Rep. Eslick on the first day of session to discuss this proposal more in depth. The County has already drafted bill language and we will work with Rep. Eslick to get the proposal introduced.

### ***Other Items***

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.

### **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 was written in coordination with WSAC and AWC. In addition to providing flexibility for REET 2 funds, the bill includes other temporary flexibility for other local government revenue sources, including the Criminal Justice Assistance Account, lodging tax funding, and more. The bill is scheduled for a hearing in the House Local Government Committee on Wednesday, Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>. GTHGA has reached out to the County to determine whether a Commissioner will testify in support of this provision at the virtual hearing. The bill is scheduled for executive session on Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **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**

### **Housing & Local Government (Senate) - Virtual, - 1/12 @ 8:00am**

SB 5042 - Public Hearing - Concerning the effective date of certain actions taken under the growth management act. (Remote testimony.) (If measure is referred to committee.)

### **Local Government (House) - Virtual, - 1/13 @ 10:00am**

HB 1056 - Public Hearing - Concerning open public meeting notice requirements and declared emergencies. (Remote testimony.) (If measure is referred to committee.)

HB 1069 - Public Hearing - Concerning local government fiscal flexibility. (Remote testimony.) (If measure is referred to committee.)

### **Local Government (House) - Virtual, - 1/15 @ 8:00am**

HB 1056 - Exec Session - Concerning open public meeting notice requirements and declared emergencies. (If measure is referred to committee.)



HB 1069 - Exec Session - Concerning local government fiscal flexibility. (If measure is referred to committee.)

### 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.

#### Lobbying

<u>Bill Details</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Position</u>
<a href="#"><u>HB 1069</u></a> <b>Local gov fiscal flexibility</b> Concerning local government fiscal flexibility.	H Prefiled	Pollet	

#### Monitoring

<u>Bill Details</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Position</u>
<a href="#"><u>HB 1025</u></a> <b>Local parks funding options</b> (SB 5006) Concerning local parks funding options.	H Prefiled	Wicks	
<a href="#"><u>HB 1056</u></a> <b>Public meetings/emergencies</b> Concerning open public meeting notice requirements and declared emergencies.	H Prefiled	Pollet	
<a href="#"><u>HB 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.	H Prefiled	Ryu	
<a href="#"><u>HB 1099</u></a> <b>Comprehensive planning</b> Improving the state's climate response through updates to the state's comprehensive planning framework.	H Prefiled	Duerr	
<a href="#"><u>HB 1110</u></a> <b>Local boards of health</b> Concerning the composition of local boards of health.	H Prefiled	Riccelli	
<a href="#"><u>HB 1117</u></a> <b>Comp. planning/salmon</b> Promoting salmon recovery through revisions to the state's comprehensive planning framework.	H Prefiled	Lekanoff	



**SB 5006**  
**(HB**  
**1025)**

**Local parks funding options**

S Prefiled

Van De Wege

Concerning local parks funding options.

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**SB 5042**

**GMA actions effective date**

S Prefiled

Salomon

Concerning the effective date of certain actions taken under the growth management act.

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