

SKAGIT COUNTY LAW LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Thursday, October 16, 2025, at 8:30 AM

The Skagit County Law Library Board of Trustees held a Special Board Meeting on October 16, 2025. The meeting was available both in person at the Library and remotely via Zoom. Present at the library were, Board of Trustees Chair Melissa Simonsen, Board members Jeri Chavez, and Judge Elizabeth Neidzwski. Also present were Superior Court Administrator Rosanna Wadkins and Law Librarian Cindy Adams. County Commissioner Peter Browning and Board member Andy Schuh were absent. Present for the discussion of the agenda items were County Court Clerk Melissa Beaton, Judge Laura Riquelme, and Judge Heather Shand.

- I. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to Order at 8:33 a.m..
- II. **Approval of a Special Board Meeting:** A request for a Special Board meeting was made, notice was published online with an agenda in compliance with the Washington Public Meetings Act. Judge Neidzwski, a member of the Board moved to have a special meeting to discuss the agenda items. The motion was seconded by Jeri Chavez. Passed 3-0-0.
- III. **Agenda:**
 1. Complaint regarding the Law Library's supply of forms:
 - a. "The County Clerk brought some concerns regarding forms/packets provided to the public in the Law Library to our attention. She's here to offer her perspective to the Board."
 - b. The Law Library Board heard from County Court Clerk Melissa Beaton. Concerns were respectfully raised regarding the forms that were being observed at different arenas of the County, such as the clerk's office and registrar's office. Some specific concerns were: 1) packets of forms that were missing a component, such as a necessary "well identified criminal parties" form or a summons; 2) forms that were observed that were not the correct forms for filing in this jurisdiction; 3) forms that were provided free or were at a charge without understanding the basis for the charge, or lack thereof. Notice was taken that the Court Clerk provides standard Washington state forms for a fee to individuals who are aiming to commence a court case. These forms are provided at a fee at \$0.50 a page pursuant to RCW.
 - c. Response and Discussion:
 - i. The comments from County Clerk Beaton were well received. The Law Library is committed to assisting patrons, and understands that the Law Library is not to provide legal advice nor assist with filling out forms.
 - ii. To promote our joint effort of serving the citizens of Skagit County there was consensus that the Law Library can also utilize the 'one-page form' distributed by the Clerk's office to direct patrons to other sources such as Skagit Legal Aid and Northwest Justice when there is legal advice that is needed.
 - iii. For our upcoming board meetings, we will include a standing agenda item to discuss and 'check-in' on this issue. It is clear from this discussion that we are collectively committed to supporting our community and the Law Library is also

cognizant of the Clerk's commitment to ensure the well-being of her employees and the integrity of the filings. Clerk Beaton agreed that this would be a useful way to continue to improve on this issue.

2. Budget discussions - County FY2026 General Fund budget shortfall

- a. "a. We learned of the deficit at our budget presentation on October 1st.
 - b. Without action, maintaining 2025 levels of service into 2026 would leave a \$19 million shortfall.
 - c. This stems from rising operating and salary costs, flat revenues, mandated service changes and uncertainty around state and federal grants.
 - d. On October 1st the county implemented a 90-day hiring freeze to reduce spending.
 - e. County Commissioners are reviewing options that could include layoffs, scaling back non-essential services or reorganizing workflows to preserve mandated services."
- b. Discussion was had regarding the real impact that this will likely have on our court system. It is very possible that our current court will not have the same staffing, to possibly include staff within the Court Clerk's Office. This will put incredible additional strain on the existing staff. It was clearly noted that we need to be working in sync to provide services and create a smooth path for citizens so that when they arrive to the clerk's office there is reduced strain. All present recognized the challenges involved when we are unable to give legal advice. Members of the bench also noted this strain and tension. All seemed supportive of the positive energy that was behind this concern: Protect our employees, support our citizens, preserve the justice system principals that include not providing legal advice.

3. Executive Session (if necessary) - Performance of a public employee (RCW 42.30.110(1)(g))
At approximately 9:15 the Board went into executive session.

IV. Adjourn: The Special Board meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 a.m.. The next Regular Board meeting is scheduled for November 13, 2025 at 8:30 a.m..