



**KING COUNTY**

1200 King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

**Signature Report**

**May 31, 2005**

**Ordinance 15195**

**Proposed No.** 2005-0185.1

**Sponsors** Gossett, Patterson and Lambert

1 AN ORDINANCE approving the District Court  
2 Operational Master Plan and adopting policies related to  
3 district court operations; and amending Ordinance 8935,  
4 Section 3, as amended, and K.C.C. 2.68.005.

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**STATEMENT OF FACTS:**

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1. The district court is the county's court of limited jurisdiction and is the  
9 largest court of limited jurisdiction in the state.

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2. The court has responsibility for traffic infractions, certain civil matters,  
11 and misdemeanor criminal offenses in the county's unincorporated areas  
12 and in cities that contract with the court. The court also has responsibility  
13 for the adjudication of "state" offenses which include those violations of  
14 state statute that occur within the county or when the arresting agency is  
15 the Washington State Patrol.

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3. The requirements and structure of the district court are contained in  
17 state statute, county code, and are also governed by court rules. State law

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- 18 empowers the local county legislative authority with significant flexibility  
19 in the development of the court's jurisdictional structure.
- 20 4. K.C.C. 4.04.200 establishes the processes for operational and facilities  
21 master planning efforts that include current and future workload  
22 assumptions.
- 23 5. Ordinance 8935 (K.C.C. 2.68.060), adopted in 1989, established a  
24 single, unified, county-wide district court. The establishing ordinance  
25 requires that the county utilize existing court facilities as satellites, while at  
26 the same time supporting the concept of local filing and handling of cases,  
27 in order to provide for a more equitable and cost-effective system of justice  
28 for the citizens of King County. It further recognized its function to serve  
29 municipal courts and the continuation of contract municipal courts.
- 30 6. Ordinance 11578, adopted in 1994, established the policy for the  
31 regional provision of district court services through an operational master  
32 plan pursuant to K.C.C. 4.04.200.
- 33 7. Ordinance 12926, adopted in 1997, established the county's mental health  
34 court within the district court. In addition, this ordinance established as policy the  
35 intent that the district court begin implementing efficiencies to reduce jail  
36 utilization, including efforts to relicense Driving With License Suspended 3rd  
37 degree ("DWLS3") offenders.
- 38 8. Ordinance 13678, adopted in 1998, specifically stated that it is the  
39 policy of the county to maintain the mental health court program within  
40 the district court.

41 9. Ordinance 14265, adopted in 2000, the council set several policies for  
42 the district court, including requiring the court to reduce its utilization of  
43 secure detention, identify system and operational efficiencies and increase  
44 court revenues. In addition, the council repeated its policy direction for  
45 the implementation of relicensing programs.

46 10. Ordinance 14374, adopted in 2002, reduced the number of court  
47 divisions in order to allow for court operational efficiencies and included  
48 policy guidance related to the implementation of any court operational  
49 efficiencies resulting from the redistricting.

50 11. Ordinance 14430, adopted in 2002, gave the council's approval to the  
51 Adult Justice Operational Master Plan, establishing county policies for the  
52 use of secure detention capacity and emphasizing system and process  
53 efficiencies for both the superior and district courts that would reduce the  
54 utilization of jail and reduce overall criminal justice expenditures.

55 12. A previous District Court Operational Master Plan was completed in  
56 1995, and amended in 1997, prior to the significant policy and operational  
57 changes within the county's criminal justice system and the court itself.

58 13. Ordinance 14797 the council required that the executive and District  
59 Court develop an updated and comprehensive operational master plan.

60 14. The planning effort was directed by an oversight committee made up  
61 of representatives of the county executive, district court, council, and  
62 cities that contract with the district court for services.

63 15. The recommendations of the oversight committee resulted from the  
64 work of consultants from the National Center for State Court and staff  
65 from the executive, district court and other stakeholders, consulted as  
66 appropriate.

67 16. As required in K.C.C. 4.04.200, the King County executive has  
68 approved the District Court Operational Master Plan and has transmitted it  
69 to the council for its review and action.

70 17. Plans submitted for approval under K.C.C. 4.04.200 are generally  
71 followed by subsequent planning documents for the development of  
72 capital improvements. Each of these plans would also be subject to  
73 council approval. The operational master plan is submitted as Attachment  
74 A to this ordinance.

75 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

76 SECTION 1. In accordance with K.C.C. 4.04.210, the District Court Operational  
77 Master Plan, Attachment A to this ordinance, dated April 2005, is hereby approved.

78 NEW SECTION. SECTION 2. Ordinance 8965, Section 3, as amended, and  
79 K.C.C. 2.68.005 are each hereby amended to read as follows:

80 **Purpose and intent.**

81 A. The King County council finds that a unified, countywide district court,  
82 utilizing existing court facilities as satellites, while at the same time supporting the concept  
83 of local filing and handling of cases, would provide for a more equitable and cost-effective  
84 system of justice for the citizens of King County. ~~((It further recognizes its function to  
85 serve municipal courts and the continuation of contract municipal courts within the district~~

86 ~~court facilities where occurring, located as close to the municipality as possible.))~~ It is the  
87 intent of council to establish such a unified district court system.

88 B. The council has received the districting committee report dated September 28,  
89 1988, which unanimously recommended to the council the concept of a unified single  
90 district court. The council finds that the interest and welfare of the public would be best  
91 served by a unified single district court. This would provide the best institutional setting  
92 for district courts. While recognizing and respecting the constitutional separation of power,  
93 the council would encourage the court to continue moving forward, under the  
94 administrative authority of a strong presiding judge, to achieve and enhance equity in  
95 policies, uniform court rules, forms and administrative procedures, standard personnel  
96 classification and procedures, flexibility for judicial assignments in order to balance the  
97 workload of the various satellite facilities, and achieve overall cost savings where found  
98 appropriate through centralization and consolidation of facilities, personnel and case  
99 assignments.

100 C. While the council recognizes the importance of meeting the needs of all citizens  
101 it serves in the region, it also recognizes the need to operate in a cost-effective manner in  
102 order to address continuing current expense deficits. The council supports the provision of  
103 district court services throughout the county, but also expects that county agencies,  
104 including the district court, provides services in the most cost-effective way. As a  
105 consequence, the council is amending the county district court plan for 2003 to reduce the  
106 number of court divisions and provide for greater flexibility in the court's allocation of  
107 resources and facilities.

108           D. As a result of the 2004-05 planning effort, the councils further reaffirms that it  
109 is county policy that to retain for the long term the aspiration to be the court of choice for  
110 court of limited jurisdiction in the county, focusing its energy and resources on improving  
111 operations and services balancing the needs of citizens, the court, the county and the  
112 cities. The council finds that the district court should develop and apply quality service  
113 standards and measures for its operations. The council also finds that the county shall:

114           1. Continue to support problem-solving courts, improving access to problem-  
115 solving courts and incorporating problem-solving courts in the district court's planning  
116 process;

117           2. Continue and make explicit the strategy of improving efficiency through  
118 unification of governance, administration and planning, centralizing workload where  
119 appropriate;

120           3. Continue to develop and implement technological improvements to support  
121 the district court operations in order to increase access to court services and information;

122           4. Continue to support the district court's function to serve cities through  
123 contracts and support flexibility in providing services and facilities for district court  
124 customers;

125           5. Continue to support a unified, countywide district court, using existing  
126 facilities, to provide for a more equitable and cost-effective system of justice for the  
127 citizens of King County:

128           a. ensuring court facilities promote system efficiencies, quality services and  
129 access to justice;

130           b. consolidating district court facilities that exist in the same city,

131           c. reconsidering facilities if there are changes with contracting cities or  
132 changes in leases; and

133           6. Work together with stakeholders to gain cooperation and assistance to meet  
134 the needs of the judicial system at the state and local levels.

135           SECTION 3. The executive, in conjunction with the district court and court  
136 stakeholders, will submit for council approval by ordinance a facilities master plan by  
137 April 1, 2006. The proposed facilities plan and ordinance must be filed in the form of  
138 sixteen copies with the clerk of the council, who will retain the original and will forward

Ordinance 15195

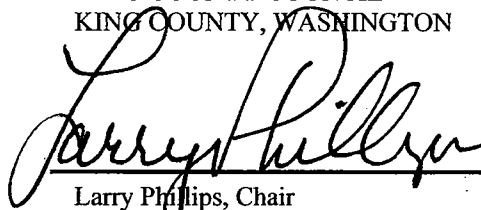
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139 copies to each councilmember and to the lead staff of the budget and fiscal management  
140 and the law, justice and human services committees or their successors.  
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Ordinance 15195 was introduced on 4/18/2005 and passed by the Metropolitan King County Council on 5/31/2005, by the following vote:

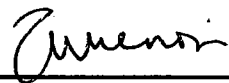
Yes: 13 - Mr. Phillips, Ms. Edmonds, Mr. von Reichbauer, Ms. Lambert, Mr. Pelz, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Hammond, Mr. Gossett, Ms. Hague, Mr. Irons, Ms. Patterson and Mr. Constantine  
No: 0  
Excused: 0

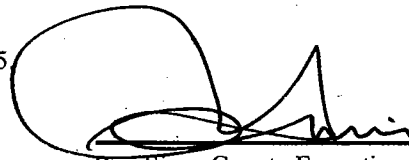
KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

  
Larry Phillips, Chair

RECEIVED  
2005 JUN - 9 PM 3: 53  
CLERK  
KING COUNTY COUNCIL

ATTEST:

  
Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED this 8 day of June, 2005   
Ron Sims, County Executive

Attachments A. District Court Operational Master Plan - April 2005



SEE ATTACHMENT

DRAWER

FOR LARGE

ATTACHMENT

TO THIS

ORDINANCE