



Signature Report

Ordinance

Proposed No. 2024-0402.2

Sponsors Zahilay and von Reichbauer

1 AN ORDINANCE providing for the submission to the
2 qualified electors of King County at a special election to be
3 held in King County on April 22, 2025, of a proposition to
4 reauthorize an expired regular property tax levy in excess
5 of the levy limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW, for
6 a consecutive seven year period beginning in 2026 at the
7 rate of not more than \$0.0275 per one thousand dollars of
8 assessed valuation, with the 2026 levy amount being the
9 base for computing maximum allowable levy amounts
10 under chapter 84.55 RCW for years two through seven
11 (2027–2032), for the purpose of funding the continued
12 operation of the regional automated fingerprint
13 identification system, also known as AFIS, which
14 maintains expanded crime scene and arrest identification
15 technology and services for all local criminal justice
16 agencies in King County.

17 **STATEMENT OF FACTS:**

18 1. To expand and enhance upon the limited identification services
19 provided by individual city and county law enforcement agencies or at the
20 state level, in 1986 the voters of King County approved funding for the

21 purchase of a shared regional automated fingerprint identification system
22 ("AFIS") computer, which matches unknown fingerprints to known
23 fingerprints. King County's AFIS database holds over two million
24 fingerprint records, over one million palmprint records, and approximately
25 sixty-three thousand crime scene prints from unsolved cases. The King
26 County AFIS is a regional system with program services available to
27 every city and unincorporated area in King County.

28 2. The AFIS computer is used for two primary purposes:

29 a. To quickly identify arrested individuals, and prevent the wrongful
30 release of those who use false names to evade arrest warrants or hide
31 criminal records; and

32 b. To search fingerprints and palmprints collected from crime scenes to
33 identify unknown suspects and aid in convictions.

34 3. The county first purchased the shared AFIS computer after the voters
35 of King County approved a property tax levy for that purpose in
36 November 1986. The ballot measure was authorized by Ordinance 7747.
37 Since 1986, the voters of King County have continued to endorse the
38 service by approving renewal property tax levies ranging from \$0.0200 to
39 \$0.0665 per one thousand dollars of assessed valuation as needed to
40 support, expand, and enhance AFIS services. The levy history for the
41 AFIS program is:

42 a. Five-year renewal levy approved in November 1990. The ballot
43 measure was authorized by Ordinance 9603;

- 44 b. Five-year renewal levy approved in November 1995. The ballot
45 measure was authorized by Ordinance 11948;
- 46 c. Five-year renewal levy approved in September 2000. The ballot
47 measure was authorized by Ordinance 13894. Funding sustained AFIS
48 program operations through 2006 without a concurrent property tax levy;
- 49 d. Six-year reauthorization levy approved in September 2006. The
50 ballot measure was authorized by Ordinance 15537. Below budget
51 program spending allowed the county to reduce levy rates in 2011 and
52 2012;
- 53 e. Six-year renewal levy approved in November 2012. The ballot
54 measure was authorized by Ordinance 17381; and
- 55 f. Six-year renewal levy approved in August 2018. The ballot measure
56 was authorized by Ordinance 18674. Through conservative spending, the
57 county accumulated a fund balance, which will sustain AFIS program
58 operations through 2025 without a concurrent property tax levy.
- 59 4. The AFIS computer was first installed in 1988. That initial system was
60 updated in 1999, and then replaced with a new system in 2011. The new
61 system introduced palmprint searching for the first time in King County.
62 The system was upgraded in 2018 to a cloud-based system which is
63 continually updated to ensure the county is using the latest fingerprint
64 matching technology.
- 65 5. The 2018 AFIS levy, which was adopted at a rate of \$0.03501 per one
66 thousand dollars of assessed valuation, expired on December 31, 2024.

67 Through prudent fiscal management, a balance has accumulated in the
68 AFIS fund over the past six years. The balance will be used to sustain
69 appropriations in 2025 and continue AFIS program operations without a
70 concurrent property tax levy. This ordinance proposes a renewed AFIS
71 levy at a rate of \$0.0275 per one thousand dollars of assessed valuation
72 with collections beginning in 2026. Without renewed revenue, fund
73 balances will be depleted after 2025 and funding for the program will end.

74 6. Large cities and metropolitan areas around the country have realized
75 great benefit from having their own AFIS technology and supporting staff,
76 but it is often not affordable for local independent police agencies. King
77 County is the only county in the state of Washington with its own AFIS
78 computer, and it is the only Washington county with a shared, regional
79 model that provides services to all local law enforcement agencies. By
80 centralizing services, technology, and resources, the regional approach
81 supports crime-solving at a lower overall cost, through economy of scale.
82 Other benefits of a regional approach include a larger, higher quality
83 database that results in more identifications, and more information sharing
84 between agencies.

85 7. In 2023, the AFIS program searched almost fifty-one thousand
86 electronically submitted fingerprint records and identified over two
87 hundred individuals who had given false names when arrested. The
88 program responded to over three thousand requests for crime scene
89 assistance, processed over fifteen thousand pieces of evidence and

90 identified well over five thousand crime scene prints. The AFIS computer
91 was also used to search almost six thousand fingerprint records submitted
92 by officers in the field using mobile identification devices.

93 8. King County criminal justice agencies consider the AFIS program to be
94 essential to law enforcement, and the AFIS program has been recognized
95 for its exceptional standards and service. The program's regional model
96 has provided effective crime-solving support to all criminal justice
97 agencies in King County since its inception in 1988. The current AFIS
98 program provides for many shared services, including:

99 a. The purchase, maintenance, and staff operation of the AFIS computer
100 which stores, searches and provides potential matches for fingerprints and
101 palmprints;

102 b. The purchase, maintenance, training and support for fifty-five
103 Livescans, which are fingerprinting devices installed throughout King
104 County for the purpose of collecting high-quality prints from arrestees and
105 applicants and transmitting them electronically for a faster and more
106 efficient comparison and response;

107 c. The purchase, maintenance, training and support for three-hundred
108 handheld mobile identification devices, which enable officers to quickly
109 search fingerprints in the field, aiding the officers in determining whether
110 to detain or release an unknown subject;

111 d. The recording of high-quality fingerprints in county jail facilities, and
112 fingerprint examiners available twenty-four hours a day and seven days a
113 week, for the quick identification of arrested individuals;

114 e. Examiners and technicians who collect prints from crime scenes,
115 process items of evidence chemically, preserve those prints
116 photographically, and search them in AFIS to identify unknown potential
117 suspects or store the unidentified prints for continual search as new
118 records are added to the system; and

119 f. Training on fingerprint collection and crime scene processing, and
120 customer support for all law enforcement agencies.

121 9. During the last six years, the AFIS program has maintained effective
122 operations, achieved efficiencies to reduce staffing, updated the AFIS
123 computer, replaced end-of-life MobileID devices, and replaced the
124 outdated and undersized processing laboratory and AFIS offices.

125 10. The AFIS program has developed a seven-year budget overview with
126 associated revenue projections for 2026-2032. The proposed levy would
127 maintain current services with a first-year levy rate that is lower than the
128 first-year levy rate approved by voters in 2018.

129 11. The AFIS program produces publicly available annual reports that
130 provide status updates on program initiatives and accomplishments. The
131 success of the regional AFIS program has been a result of regular
132 collaboration with law enforcement agencies across King County.

133 12. The proposed levy will be authorized for seven years.

134 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

135 SECTION 1. Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this
136 ordinance unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

137 A. "AFIS" means automated fingerprint identification system.

138 B. "AFIS computer" means the automated fingerprint identification system,
139 which is the computer system that utilizes AFIS as its foundation, and through modular
140 design incorporates other databases of criminal identification records, and related
141 equipment, technology, networks and interfaces employed by trained staff for capturing,
142 storing and comparing criminal identification records based on friction ridge analysis, or
143 successor technology.

144 C. "AFIS program" means the acquisition, implementation, maintenance and
145 operation of the regional AFIS computer. "AFIS program" also means the countywide
146 effort of trained personnel who, through fingerprints, palmprints and other identification
147 methods: identify detained persons; identify suspects of crimes from fingerprints and
148 palmprints left on evidence at crime scenes and other locations; assist in the conviction of
149 criminals through these identifications; train law enforcement on crime scene evidence
150 collection and identification methods; support accurate and complete criminal history
151 records; conduct field research aimed at improving and enhancing program services; and
152 otherwise enhance public safety as consistent with this ordinance and permitted by law.

153 D. "Levy" means the levy of regular property taxes, for the specific purpose and
154 term provided in this ordinance and authorized by the electorate in accordance with state
155 law.

156 E. "Levy proceeds" means the principal amount of moneys raised by the levy,
157 any interest earnings on the moneys, and the proceeds of any interim financing following
158 authorization of the levy.

159 **SECTION 2. Levy submittal to voters.** To provide necessary moneys for the
160 AFIS program, the King County council shall submit to the qualified electors of the
161 county a proposition to reauthorize an expired regular property tax levy in excess of the
162 levy limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW for seven consecutive years, with
163 collections beginning in 2026, at a rate not to exceed \$0.0275 per one thousand dollars of
164 assessed value in the first year of the levy period. The dollar amount of the levy in the
165 first year shall be the base upon which the maximum allowable levy amounts in years
166 two through seven (2027-2032) shall be calculated using the limit factor in chapter 84.55
167 RCW, as amended.

168 **SECTION 3. Deposit of levy proceeds.** All levy proceeds collected as
169 authorized in this ordinance shall be deposited into a subfund in the automated fingerprint
170 identification system fund and used only for the eligible expenditures described in section
171 4 of this ordinance.

172 **SECTION 4. Eligible expenditures.** If approved by the qualified electors of the
173 county, all proceeds of the levy authorized in this ordinance shall be used to pay the costs
174 of the AFIS program, together with the necessary software and hardware operations and
175 maintenance expenses and such sums as are necessary to provide for the costs incurred by
176 the county that are attributable to AFIS levy elections. Eligible expenditures include the
177 salaries, benefits, training, office and laboratory supplies and equipment, workspace,
178 contracted goods and services, related studies and research, administration, and other

179 costs incidental to the operation and enhancement of the regional AFIS program.

180 Workspace expenditures may include the lease, rental, or purchase of land or building

181 space to house AFIS program technology, staff, or laboratory functions.

182 Eligible expenditures shall also include nonbonded debt and finance costs and the

183 reimbursement of extraordinary expenditures incurred by the county after the effective

184 date of this ordinance with regard to the AFIS program. The AFIS levy is intended as

185 supplemental funding to maintain the current expanded crime scene and arrest

186 identification technology and services on a shared regional basis, which lowers the cost

187 of technology and staff through economy of scale and makes the benefit accessible to all

188 agencies. The levy shall not at any time provide general criminal justice funding or fund

189 programs or purposes not otherwise consistent with this ordinance.

190 **SECTION 5. Call for special election.** In accordance with RCW 29A.04.321,

191 the King County council hereby calls for a special election to be held on April 22, 2025.

192 The King County director of elections shall cause notice to be given of this ordinance in

193 accordance with the state constitution and general law and to submit to the qualified

194 electors of the county, at the said special county election, the proposition hereinafter set

195 forth. The clerk of the council shall certify that proposition to the King County director

196 of elections in substantially the following form, with such modifications as may be

197 required by the prosecuting attorney:

198 King County

199 Proposition No. 1

200 Regional Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) Levy

201 The King County council has passed Ordinance ____ concerning this

202 proposition for the regional automated fingerprint identification system
203 (AFIS) levy. This proposition would fund the continued operation of the
204 AFIS program to provide enhanced forensic fingerprint and palmprint
205 technology and services to aid in the administration of justice. It would
206 authorize an additional property tax for seven years beginning in 2026 at
207 \$0.0275 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, use the 2026 levy amount to
208 compute limitations under Chapter 84.55 RCW for subsequent levies in
209 2027-2032, and exempt eligible seniors, veterans, and disabled persons
210 under RCW 84.36.381. Should this proposition be:

211 Approved []

212 Rejected []

213 **SECTION 6. AFIS advisory committee extension.** If the levy is approved by
214 the voters in accordance with section 5 of this ordinance, the AFIS advisory committee
215 previously authorized by the voters shall be retained to review AFIS operations and
216 expenditures and make recommendations concerning the AFIS program.

217 **SECTION 7. Ratification.** Certification of the proposition by the clerk of the
218 King County council to the director of elections in accordance with law before the
219 election on April 22, 2025, and any other act consistent with the authority and before the
220 effective date of this ordinance are hereby ratified and confirmed.

221 **SECTION 8. Severability.** If any provision of this ordinance or its application to

222 any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the ordinance or the
223 application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.

KING COUNTY COUNCIL
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Rod Dembowski, Chair

ATTEST:

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED this ____ day of _____, _____.

Dow Constantine, County Executive

Attachments: None