

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FOR ISLAND COUNTY

Law & Justice Facility, 101 NE 6th St, PO Box 5000, Coupeville WA 98239-5000
Phone: (360) 679-7361 Fax: (360) 679-7383

ALAN R. HANCOCK
Judge
VICKIE I. CHURCHILL
Judge
MICHAEL MERRINGER
Court Administrator
SHERRY CAMERON
Court Manager

To: Board of Island County Commissioners

From: Michael S. Merringer, Administrator

Re: 2011 Budget Proposal

Given the prospect that I will not be permitted to have an opportunity to meet with you prior to the adoption of the Island County 2011 budget, I wish to convey my concerns to you in this memo. Per your request, Island County Superior Court/Juvenile and Family Court Services and Juvenile Detention were to submit a 2011 proposed budget with a ten (10) percent reduction. This has been a difficult task to evaluate programs, to determine which more worthy than another is, and also to evaluate which personnel should be cut. However, the greater difficulty has been how to determine the actual target for reduction. Most of our department's current expense budget includes the salary, wages and benefits (SWB) of our employees. Although the budget director has supplied the projected SWB for personnel in 2011, these estimates are prior to any negotiated resolution with the Union which could drastically change the SWB of our employees and significantly change the target.

Only last year, the Commissioners directed departments to submit reductions at specific percentages only to discover later that the county negotiated additional furloughs for our employees, further penalizing the departments over and beyond what was requested. The current situation is setting the stage for that very same result. By following this process, our reductions will be based on this year's projected budget, cutting our employee's salaries and benefits, only to find out that negotiations with the Union will further reduce our employee's salaries and benefits, thus making their losses greater than 10%. If this occurs, it will further erode the trust departments have in county leadership and as well as the integrity of the budget process.

In addition, I was advised that any county funding the departments were able to save or generate in 2010 will not be considered in their 2011 budget target. If this is the case, why would we be motivated to save or generate funding? Given this practice, departments are encouraged to spend every dime by the end of the year without any

incentive to save if possible. In this economic environment, that truly does not make sense. I urge you to build in incentives to save by rewarding those departments that are cost-conscious.

Over the years, each of Superior Court departments has been streamlined for efficiency. That being said, reductions identified will create juvenile caseloads exceeding recommended levels and create a Maintenance and Operation budget in detention that that will result in the elimination of services and programs. When you are talking about detention, elimination of services and programs can erode the safety precautions built into the system, with the result that juveniles in the county's care and custody could suffer injuries. That could only increase our overall costs with lawsuits, as well as be a breakdown in the responsibility we have for those we incarcerate.

For the 2011 proposed budget, Island County Superior Court, Juvenile and Family Court Services and Juvenile Detention propose the elimination of a Probation Counselor Position (\$55,000-\$65,000) depending on benefits and the elimination of \$32,563 from Detention's M&O budget. In addition to my comments, the following additional comments and attachments should be considered as well.