



City of Kelso 2019-2021 Legislative Biennium Agenda

Kelso – a City of Parks

The City is making major investments in neighborhood and regional parks, and seeks the state's continued partnership in improving the quality of life for our residents. Kelso completed a park facility plan in early 2018 focusing on community needs for neighborhood parks. The City will be seeking project funding from the Recreation and Conservation Office to implement the plan. The plan is based on a vision for the community that includes both neighborhood and regional parks such as the Tam O'Shanter athletic facility. We are grateful for the investment the state made in the Tam O'Shanter facility, and are seeking an additional **\$1 million capital budget** investment to complete the project. This will enhance the park's value as a destination sports facility, and when combined with implementation of the park facility plan, will enhance the City's reputation for bountiful parks.

Affordable Housing & Senior Services

The City of Kelso is not immune to the statewide affordable housing crisis. Staff have identified an opportunity to provide affordable housing in conjunction with restoring the City's aging senior center. Because of the complicated nature of this project, which involves multiple partners, the City is seeking **\$250,000 capital budget funding** to develop a feasibility study and work plan that can be guaranteed future success. Once a strategy has been fully developed, the City will seek state funding for implementation.

Level the Playing Field for Local Lodging Taxes (included only if not resolved locally)

Cities within Cowlitz County are in a unique position under state law regarding the collection of the locally approved 2% lodging tax. Unlike most other areas of the state, this taxing authority was granted to Cowlitz County rather than its cities. Kelso lodging facilities generate the lion's share of the revenue in the area, and the City wants to invest these dollars in its own amenities that support increased demand for room nights – such as the Tam O'Shanter Athletic Complex. Kelso is seeking an amendment to RCW 67.28 providing the same authority that cities across the state have.

Lowest Bidder Flexibility

The City of Kelso would like additional flexibility in selecting companies for public projects, rather than being forced to pick the lowest bidder at the expense of other important factors. Currently, RCW 39.26.160(1)(a)(iii) states that after a competitive solicitation process, the awarding agency must "Award the purchase or contract to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder." Providing responsible stewardship of public resources is a paramount city duty. However, because current law restricts cities from considering factors such as past experience, their ability to best protect public resources is hindered. The City will support legislation to expand the criteria that cities may consider when awarding public contracts.

Increased funding for the Basic Law Enforcement Academy

The City of Kelso supports increased funding and other solutions to ensure newly hired officers are able to complete training through the Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) at the Criminal Justice

Training Commission (CJTC) in a timely manner. At current funding levels, the CJTC has a backlog of officers awaiting training. State law requires that officers are trained within 6 months of hire. The current backlog exceeds this statutory timeline. This results in law enforcement agencies throughout the state hiring new officers, and then keeping them on staff for upwards of 6 months, unable to perform police work until their training is complete.

State Environmental Permitting Process

The State of Washington must streamline its environmental permitting processes so that permit decisions are made in a more timely and efficient manner. The communities of southwest Washington, including the City of Kelso, have been on the front line as state agencies have turned local projects into extenuated ideological battles. The City supports appropriate environmental review that is balanced with the need for economic development in the region. The state must ensure that its permitting processes do a better job of striking this balance.

The City supports the Association of Washington Cities' legislative agenda.