2024 Supplemental Department Questions

Please answer the following questions in a word document and return to Council. The answers to these questions will be provided to council as supplemental information. While not part of the physical budget presentation to Council, departments should be prepared to answer questions Council may have on these supplemental questions. If you feel that you have provided an answer in a previous question, please don't repeat your answer, simply refer to the earlier question/answer.

Strategic Goals

1. Provide your 2024 strategic goals; how are they different from 2023? In what way, if at all, are your strategic changes demonstrated in your budget request?

   A. Please see attached for our 2023 Strategic Plan. The goals remain for 2024 and primarily include completing our mandated duties accurately, efficiently and on time. Also, we have the goal to go live in the first quarter of 2024 with our shared Assessor/Treasurer Aumentum software which replaces our current ProVal Appraisal and Ascend Administrative software products.

   Our budget requests support both the ability for our office to complete our core functions and effectively bring our new software systems online. Due to new legislation and the completion of this project, we are asking for additional resources including an increase in staff.

National, state and local landscape:

1. What are the federal, state and local issues facing your work? What risks or opportunities does that create for you in 2024 and beyond? What is your plan to leverage the opportunity or mitigate the risk? What support do you need?

2. What, if any, new mandates do you have impacting your work? Are they funded or unfunded? What is the plan for accomplishing the work?

   A. The Snohomish County Assessor's Office administers several programs that provide property tax relief for qualifying individuals and properties. The Senior Citizens and Persons with Disabilities Exemption provides for individuals or couples who own and occupy a residence or mobile home and were 61 or older by December 31st of the year prior to the current property tax year or were retired because of disability may qualify for a property tax reduction. To qualify, the total household income including social security and disability payments must be $55,743 or less in 2022 for a reduction in 2023 property taxes.

SHB 1355 increased the income threshold limit for the 2024 tax year for this program. The 2023 income limit for 2024 tax relief for Snohomish County residents will be $75,000. We estimate that we will receive approximately 4000 additional applications in 2024 based on the income threshold increase approved by SHB 1355. The total number of approved Senior Citizen Exemptions for tax year 2022 was 10,536. This increase in workload will require additional staffing resources and we have asked for increasing a current .5 FTE to 1.0 and adding an additional full-time FTE to the Exemption team for a net increase of 1.5 FTE's.

Also, during the 2023 Legislative Session, two bills, E2SHB 1110 and EHB 1337 were passed and signed into law that will increase the workload for multiple divisions within our office. These bills ease barriers to the construction and use of accessory dwelling units, increase residential building capacity of middle housing and increase units per lot. In addition, cities such as the City of Everett are passing ordinances allowing ADU's to become condominiums thus creating separate ownership by unit. Both types of subdivision activities will require the creation and redescription of property records by this office along with picking up the new construction via building permits as well as continued valuation of additional property. This workload increase is on top of an already stretched employee resource. We have asked for 1 additional FTE for the Property Control Division and 2.5 FTEs for the Residential Appraisal Division. All three bills are unfunded mandates.

The request for an increase in FTE resources for the Residential Appraisal Division is also because of the continual increase in workload due to an annual increase in parcel count and we are at the point of not being able to pick up all new construction or not being able to close roll by the mandated deadline. We have reached capacity to do the work.

Programs

1. List programs, projects and services within your department funded through federal COVID/ARPA funds. What, if any, of those programs are you recommending ongoing funding for and what is the source of ongoing funding?
2. For programs funded by COVID/ARPA funds, detail the plan to close out and/or transition those programs to an ongoing funding source in 2025 and beyond.
3. What new programs are you launching for 2024? What need or efficiency is that new program addressing? How is that program funded for sustainability? What metrics are in place to determine effectiveness?
4. If different than #3, what are your areas of significant investment? What are you not doing because of that investment?

A. We currently do not use COVID/ARPA funding.

Internal Operations

1. What is your department doing to streamline processes or deliver services in a new way? How do your budget allocation requests play into these innovations? Are there ways which a different budget approach, e.g. several departments sharing a resource, could achieve the same or better results in a more cost-effective way?

A. Here are examples of ways we are streamlining and/or improving services:

- Exemptions Division processed all Senior Citizen/People with Disabilities exemption applications received by the end of 2022 – sent out 4500 renewals in March 2023
- Backlog in Property Control Division has been reduced by a significant amount and continues to be addressed
- Historic field book pages migrated from HighView to Open Text in 2021 are now available to the public on Assessor's webpage
- Project to correct ownership records to include missing spouses has reviewed 6,639 of 28,660 parcels identified as potentially needing updates and completed 2,238 ownership updates.
- New eNotification service allowed 2,063 registered taxpayers to receive assessed value notices via email in June 2023. Print vendor is collecting and managing email addresses as part of contract for 2023. Registered accounts have increased to 3,922 as of Sept. 29, 2023 for next year.
- Implementation of new appraisal and tax administrative system – Aumentum project is underway – Go Live is scheduled for February 2024
  - Progress is being made in conversion, configuration, and customization of Aumentum to meet Snohomish County needs
  - Re-engineering business processes to take advantage of improved functionality of new system
  - Workflow enhancements will increase efficiency of handing work from division to division and from Assessor to Treasurer
  - Management will have clarity of status of workflows to monitor progress, backlogs and productivity
  - New analysis tools for studying & applying market value changes to both real and personal property
  - Enhanced online experience for taxpayers
  - True integration between appraisal and tax administration will reduce duplicate data entry
  - Integrated Appeals Case Management System to be used jointly with the BOE

2. What, if any, hiring challenges are you experiencing? How is that affecting your level of service or internal operations? How are you mitigating those operational challenges and/or what is your plan for recruitment?

A. Our challenges lately have been mainly turnover issues vs recruitment. We are losing trained employees to other offices within Snohomish County Government due to pay concerns. Implementing the recommendations from the compensation study for our office would be a start in helping us retain trained staff. The impact to internal operations is time spent being in a continual training mode.

3. To help inform Council on experiences around hiring and retention, please provide a list of all vacant position titles, position codes, FTE amount (1.0, 0.5, etc.), date vacated, and date first posted. Template spreadsheet attached for convenience and conformity; if already tracking information in another format, that is acceptable as well. Please list each vacancy separately.

A. Please see attached spreadsheet.

4. What effect has the increase of inflation and/or supply chain issues had on your department? What, if any, services, or projects have you had to adjust to accommodate for this? (i.e. moving to outside contracted services, delaying of project starts and/or purchasing, redistribution of workload, etc.)

A. One impact you will see reflected in our budget due to increase costs is for postage and printing of our required Revaluation Notices and Personal Property Listings. To mitigate, our current vendor does offer and administer an e-notice program for the Revaluation Notices that property owners can opt into. It is not, a requirement at this time however, so for those that do not participate must be mailed a notice. USPS costs have increased along with paper costs. We are currently advertising the ability to receive your notice by email in order to increase participation.

5. When was the last time your department implemented a fee increase? Do you have any plans to increase fees?

A. N/A – Our office does not charge a fee for service.

6. Do you have any plans to do a rate/fee study? Are your current fees established based on a full cost recovery model?

A. N/A

Successes

1. Take this opportunity to share one significant success in your department over this past year. What made it a success?

A. We have made significant progress working with our software vendor, Aumentum Services and the Treasurer's Office in conversion, development, and implementation of that project. We hope to share several successes in 2024, once we are live and fully utilizing the new tools. Projected go-live is in the 1st quarter of 2024.

We have also made significant progress in updating ownership records by utilizing the 1.0 FTE resource provided by Council this year. 6639 of 28,660 accounts have been reviewed and 2,238 of those accounts updated with multiple owners where only one showed prior.