



Snohomish County Council

Committee: LJHS
ECAF: 22-0336
Proposal: Ord. 22-015

Analyst: Heidi Beazizo
Date: March 24, 2022

Consideration

Council consideration is requested to approve proposed Ordinance 22-015 which would increase the number of Superior Court Commissioners from five (5) to six (6) with the additional position focusing on Protection Orders.

Background

The Washington State Legislature passed [Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1320](#), “An Act Relating to modernizing, harmonizing, and improving the efficacy and accessibility of laws concerning civil protection orders” (ESSHB 1320) during the 2021 Washington State Legislative Regular Session and Governor Inslee signed the bill into law effective July 1, 2022.

ESSHB 1320 contains significant changes to how protection order matters are heard in Washington State which will significantly impact Superior Court caseloads throughout Washington State and increase the amount of time in which Superior Courts spend on protection order matters.

Most protection order matters in Snohomish County Superior Court are heard within the Court Commissioner departments, therefore, the Snohomish County Superior Court is in need of additional Court Commissioner resources to respond effectively to the workload impacts precipitated by ESSHB 1320.

ESSHB 1320 creates a new type of Court Commissioner, identified as a Protection Order Commissioner, for Superior Courts to consider using to assist with this new and increased amount of work.

The Superior Court believes that adding one (1) additional Court Commissioner will provide the Snohomish County Superior Court with the capacity to address the impacts from ESSHB 1320, hear cases in a timely manner and continue to secure access to justice for our community.

Three (3) currently vacant positions and additional salary savings will be used to cover the costs of the additional Court Commissioner and Judicial Coordinator.

Current Proposal

Scope: Ordinance 22-015 increases the number of County Commissioners from five (5) to six (6) with a specific reference to the additional commissioner as the Protection Order Commissioner. An additional RCW reference of [10.14.045](#) (the RCW authorizing the specific commissioner type) is also added to code.

Duration: N/A

Fiscal Implications: Annual anticipated expense: \$313,659.20

2022 Budget: Appropriation authority does exist but the two new positions of Court Commissioner and Judicial Coordinator were not in the budget. 2022 anticipated expense: \$156,829.60.

Future Budget Impacts: Yes.

Handling: Urgent

Approved-as-to-form: Yes

Risk Management: N/A (council initiated and not routed to Risk)

Executive Recommendation: N/A (council initiated and not routed to Risk)

Attachments: N/A

Amendments: N/A

Request: Move to GLS on March 30 for Council to consider setting a time and date for a public hearing of April 13th. Following the public hearing, consider taking action.