



# City of Seattle

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## NEWS

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### **Possible extension of county jail services contract welcomed; move doesn't eliminate need for additional jail capacity**

SEATTLE – Seattle officials today welcomed the King County Council's request that the county executive extend jail services contracts with local cities in the short and long term, pursue expansion of the Regional Justice Center (RJC) in Kent, and collaborate on planning for additional jail beds.

“While Seattle agrees King County should be the regional provider of jail services and appreciates the County Council's actions today, the legislation does not guarantee any jail beds for cities,” said Catherine Cornwall, senior policy analyst for the city of Seattle. “Until we have that guarantee, the cities need to move ahead with their plans.”

The County Council's legislation requests that the county executive:

- begin negotiations with cities for a two-year contract extension (and increase the adult daily population limits to the extent possible);
- submit to the Council by Oct. 1, 2008, a proposal – which includes capital and operating cost estimates – to expand the RJC;
- negotiate with the state and the cities to seek their participation on capital planning for additional jail capacity; and
- negotiate a new long-term agreement with the cities upon completion of the contract extension.

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Cities are responsible for jailing people convicted of misdemeanor offenses. Like many cities located in King County, Seattle has a contract with King County that allows it to house its misdemeanants in the county's jail. The county is responsible for housing felons and those arrested for misdemeanors in unincorporated areas. Due to space constraints in existing county facilities, King County has required that Seattle and other cities end their use of the county jail for city misdemeanants by December 31, 2012.

All cities in King County except Kent and Enumclaw, which have their own municipal jails and do not contract with King County for jail services, formed the Jail Administrative Group (JAG) to address issues related to the cities' contracts for jail services with King County and Yakima County. The JAG is also working together to address the lack of jail capacity for their misdemeanor offenders. Last week JAG representatives presented information to the County Council regarding cities' needs.

The cities specifically requested the county take the actions the County Council included in the legislation passed today. "The County Council clearly listened to our concerns and we hope the King County Executive will implement the Council's requests," Cornwall said. "Extending the jail services contract to 2014 allows a more realistic timeframe for additional jail facilities to be sited and built. However, simply extending the contract for two years does not allow cities to stop planning for a new jail to house cities' misdemeanants. Cities still face a capacity issue that needs to be addressed by building a new facility or facilities."

On June 30, during a Committee of the Whole meeting regarding jail services, King County Councilmember Julia Patterson noted cities embarked on the effort to build new jail beds because the county had asked them to leave its corrections system. She called the cities' efforts to replace jail beds responsible and encouraged them to continue their jail planning efforts as it might not be possible for the county and cities to find a joint solution.

King County projects it will need 3,575 jail beds by 2026 and cities in the county project they will need 1,450 beds. Expanding the Regional Justice Center in Kent will provide 460 additional jail beds – enough to meet King County's projected jail bed needs but not those of the cities.

"If this effort is going to work, the county needs to join the jail planning efforts of the cities that are already under way," Cornwall said. "The only certainty cities have right now is their jail services contracts currently expire in 2012."

Typically, it takes at least six years to site and build a jail. Unless these issues with the county are resolved by early September, the cities will have to continue on with their current plans in order to be able to replace by January 1, 2013, the beds they are losing at King County jail facilities.

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