



Pierce County

Office of the County Executive

930 Tacoma Avenue South, Room 737
Tacoma, Washington 98402-2100
FAX (253) 798-6628
www.piercecountywa.org

PAT McCARTHY
Executive
(253) 798-7477
pmccart@co.pierce.wa.us

KEVIN R. PHELPS
Deputy Executive
(253) 798-7477
kphelps@co.pierce.wa.us

November 3, 2009

Roger Bush, Chair
Pierce County Council
930 Tacoma Ave So, Rm 1046
Tacoma, WA 98402

Dear Chairman Bush:

I thought it would be timely and helpful to bring you and your colleagues on the Pierce County Council up to speed on several important activities that my office is undertaking. As the current economic challenges we are facing look to be with us for a while, my office is working hard to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of county programs and operations. As a result, we have kicked off several important efforts.

I have asked Deputy Executive Kevin Phelps to lead a team that will look specifically at whether it would be advantageous to the citizens we serve by consolidating Human Services and Community Services. Kevin has assembled a team of selected county employees to study this possibility. Included on the team are Toby Rickman, Dave Stewart, Bret Carlstad, Patrick Kenney, Tom Hilyard and several key staff from both Human Services and Community Services.

Specifically, the study group has been asked to examine whether cost savings, increased efficiencies or more effective programs can be achieved through consolidation. I have asked for their report by January 15, 2010.

As I have mentioned to you and your colleagues, a second effort has been underway since March. Working with staff from both PALS and PWU, I set a goal to create a permitting department that is second to none in Washington State. To accomplish this goal, we set up two task forces, one internal and one external. The internal group was headed by Chuck Kleeberg and Toby Rickman. The second group was headed by Kevin, which was made up of frequent users of our permitting department, primarily from engineering and development firms.

Each task force was asked to look at four functional areas: organizational structure, systems and processes, code, and organizational culture. In June, each task force presented draft recommendations to Kevin. Staff then merged the two reports and aligned them into functional charts. In September an all-day retreat was held to focus on the recommendations. Because PWU often plays an important role in the permitting process, Debbie Hyde was the facilitator for the retreat.

The work from that retreat has been further refined and will be presented to us for review later next month. We are very excited about the work that has been done. Staff have been very receptive to my challenge. Despite all of the downsizing and budget constraints, PALS is poised



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to make significant improvements in the coming year. I will provide the Council a briefing on our progress in early January if you think it would be of interest.

The final significant project has centered on our efforts to replace recently retired IT Director Terry Hale. We embarked on a nationwide search earlier this summer. We had over 300 applicants for the job and attracted a very diverse and talented group. With the help of our recruitment firm (Karras Consulting) we whittled the applicants to five outstanding candidates. Three have extensive public sector experience and two have world-class private sector experience.

I put together an interview panel that included three Pierce County department directors, Tacoma's assistant manager who oversees their IT Division, and one citizen who has extensive IT experience at the State and local level. They interviewed the candidates and rated from 1 – 5 their selection. I will be interviewing the top three candidates next week.

One of my goals is to select an IT Director that can lead our IT Department through the type of change that will help improve County operations while balancing tough economic conditions. Information technology is ever-changing, and we need leadership that can keep Pierce County at the forefront of evolving technologies.

For example, migrating away from expensive mainframe computers to the server environment is now common place in large organizations. "Cloud" computing may make investment in ownership of software obsolete. A recent decision by the City of Los Angeles to utilize cloud technology will move all e-mail and application software to Google servers. This move is slated to save Los Angeles more than \$8 million during the first several years. Our next IT Director will be tasked with looking at emerging technologies and trends, making sure Pierce County IT services continue to provide exceptional service and value.

While I highlight these three specific areas, I want the Council to know that we will continue to seek improvements in every branch of Pierce County. We will continue to look for viable consolidation opportunities, service delivery improvements and more effective strategies in how we do business. I will continue to keep you informed of our goals, progress and successes.

Sincerely,



Pat McCarthy
Pierce County Executive

cc: County Councilmember's
Kevin R. Phelps, Deputy Executive
Patrick Kenney, Director, Budget & Finance