



News and Information

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Sheriff Concerned About Lack of Transparency from County Council

Story- The democratic process should be a transparent process, one where elected officials seek the community's input and participation before taking action. I am deeply concerned that King County voters have not been given ample opportunity to be heard on Proposed Ordinance 2020-0231, which seeks an amendment to the County charter that attempts to circumvent state law (RCW Chapter [36.28](#)) by narrowing the Sheriff's authority to whatever role the Council assigns, rather than the broad scope of authority provided by our legislature.

Under this measure, 9 members of the county council, and the County Executive, would control the separately elected Sheriff. The Executive already controls our human resources, hiring processes and bargaining with labor groups. The Executive and Council control the King County Sheriff's Office budget, and can use provisos to effect accountability and change.

We believe voters want a fully independent Sheriff, who is free to take bold action on reforms and represent all of the communities and interests of our diverse constituency.

In 2017, I ran on a platform of reform and have since made significant changes to Sheriff's Office policies and training. Despite community calls for continued reform and reinvention of the role of law enforcement in our community, I have not received any reform proposals from the members of the County Council who are attempting to rush these matters to the ballot under the guise of reform. Only Council members Lambert, Dunn and von Reichbauer

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have engaged in meaningful conversation with me to bring about the changes our community members would like to see. (see attached letter to Councilmember Joe McDermott)

The Council's lack of transparency about Proposed Ordinance 2020-0231 should be compared to Proposed Ordinance 2020-0205, which seeks to amend the County charter and revert to an appointed Sheriff. This measure was studied and vetted for over a year by the Charter Review Commission, and was the subject of multiple public hearings at various times of the day so all voices could be heard. Critical questions should be asked about why Council is not affording the public the same opportunity with Ordinance 2020-0231.

Sheriff Mitzi G. Johanknecht

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