



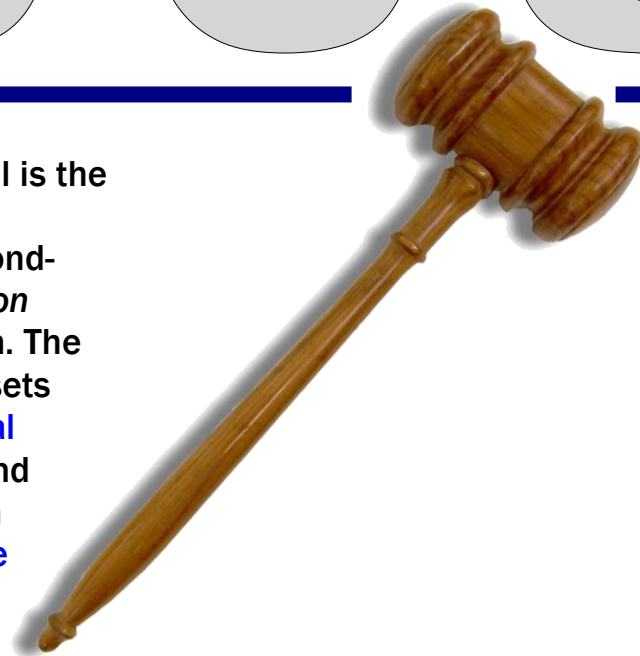
Pierce County Council



Photo by Michael Pawelak

ANNUAL REPORT 2008

The Pierce County Council is the **legislative branch of government** for the second-largest county (*population 805,400*) in Washington. The seven-member council sets policy, adopts the **annual budget**, and proposes and amends the laws known collectively as the **Pierce County Code**.





Welcome to the Pierce County Council's 2008 Annual Report, which contains a summary of major legislation the council approved during the past year. The council conducted:

- 58 full council and Committee of the Whole meetings
- 46 Rules and Operations Committee meetings
- 10 Community Development Committee meetings
- 11 Public Safety & Human Services Committee meetings
- 14 Economic & Infrastructure Development Committee meetings
- 5 Select Committee on Emergency Preparedness meetings

...and introduced 121 ordinances (*which carry the force of law*) and 186 resolutions (*which set policy, confirm appointments or request information*).

travel by employees and froze hiring in general-fund departments (2008-35s) ([VIDEO](#)); and

- cut county expenditures by \$3.6 million by making 1 percent reductions to general-fund departments and using reserve funds (2008-9s2) ([VIDEO](#)).

Capital Facilities Plan

The council approved amendments to the six-year Capital Facilities Plan, which keeps the county's building plans in sync with revenues through 2014 ([2008-79s](#)).

Channel migration zones

A council resolution ([R2008-125](#)) creates an ad-hoc citizens committee to provide recommendations to Pierce County regarding channel migration zones, which are areas where a river is predicted to flood based on past flow patterns.

Charter amendment

The council passed and forwarded to the November 2009 ballot a proposal to amend the Pierce County Charter by moving county elections to odd-numbered years and to limit the terms of councilmembers and the executive to three consecutive four-year terms ([2008-113](#)).

Children's programs

In the final 2009 county budget, the council added \$10,000 to the United Way Early Learning program after funding had been eliminated from the preliminary budget

Animal control

Based on Auditor's Office recommendations requested in 2007, the council instituted much tougher laws against dangerous and violent animals, holding owners accountable. Requirements define how dangerous or potentially dangerous animals must be controlled, increase the fees for keeping such animals, require owners to have liability insurance worth at least \$500,000, and broaden the penalties for failing to comply ([2008-14](#)) ([VIDEO](#)).

Auditor appointment

The council established a process to appoint a nonpartisan replacement for former auditor Pat McCarthy, who was elected County Executive ([R2008-186](#)).

Browns Point/Dash Point

The county's 10th community plan supplement to the 1994 Comprehensive Plan governs land use in the 615-acre Browns Point and Dash Point areas ([2008-50s](#)).

Budget (2009)

The council's \$864.5 million 2009 budget ([2008-95s2](#)) forces the county to live within its means in difficult economic times, yet it protects the core services of county government – public safety, criminal justice and transportation – from significant staff or funding reductions ([VIDEO](#)).

See also [Childrens Programs](#), [Traffic Safety](#).

Budget (2008)

Throughout 2008, the council approved [supplemental budget ordinances](#) that:

- swapped the county's part ownership of Cheney Stadium for the city of Tacoma's part ownership in the County-City Building ([2008-112s](#), [R2008-182](#)) ([VIDEO](#));
- allocated 14.5 staff to allow the county to comply with state and federal surface-water quality requirements ([2008-75](#));
- banned out-of-state

ANNUAL REPORT 2008

(2008-95s2).

The council authorized the County Executive to enter into a 25-year lease to develop a Boys and Girls Club HOPE Center at the county's Meridian Habitat Park on South Hill (2008-43) (VIDEO).

County-City Building / Cheney Stadium swap

See [Budget \(2008\)](#).

Criminal Justice Task Force

The 18-member Criminal Justice Task Force – composed of leaders from every aspect of Pierce County's criminal justice system – reconvened in March to study ways to meet the county's growing jail-space needs. It will continue to meet in 2009 and will recommend actions to the council (R2008-20s) (VIDEO).

Economic stimulus plans

The council requested (R2008-77s) and accepted (R2008-146) the Pierce County Economic Stimulus Report, and asked the County Executive to develop action items for the council's 2009 budget review process (VIDEO).

Another proposal (R2008-91s) asks the County Executive to develop a financing package to accelerate the funding and construction of improvements to the 176th Street East corridor (VIDEO).

Ethics

Sweeping changes to ethics rules (2007-118s2) governing those attempting

to influence county government will:

- require paid lobbyists and others to register annually with the county Auditor's Office and report their expenses and personal finances;
- prohibit county officials and employees from accepting most gifts from lobbyists;
- empower the Ethics Commission to issue advisory opinions; and
- increase the penalty for failing to comply (VIDEO).

Flood regulations

The council provided regulatory relief to property owners in flood-prone areas by amending the county's existing flood-hazard regulations. The ordinance (2008-16s2) outlines exemptions based on the type of building that can be built, rebuilt or modified, and creates a process for landowners to request a variance from the county for a specific construction project.

A second proposal (R2008-74s) urges local, state

and federal officials to support the funding of improvements to the lower Puyallup River levee, which was decertified by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The decertification has meant lower property values, higher flood-insurance premiums and more land-use restrictions for some county residents (VIDEO).

See also [Channel Migration Zones](#).

Mail-only voting

The council urged the state House of Representatives to defeat a bill that mandated mail-in voting (R2008-17). The bill eventually failed.

Panhandling

Under council-approved legislation designed to create common-sense limits to panhandling, solicitors must stay at least 25 feet away from people using ATM machines, pay phones, gas stations, or other exposed public areas. Aggressive panhandling and panhandling to moving vehicles are also prohibited and carry a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or 90 days in jail (2008-45s) (VIDEO).

Parks

The council approved updates to the county's 20-year Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, which it does every six years (2008-38s) (VIDEO).

In addition, the council approved the county's six-year Parks Improvement Plan, which outlines funding

PIERCE COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS

Formed: 1852
Charter adopted: 1981
Area: 1,790 square miles
Population: 805,400
Budget: \$864.5 million (2009)
Three largest cities: Tacoma - 202,700; Lakewood - 58,780; Puyallup - 36,930

PIERCE COUNTY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2008

2008 PIERCE COUNTY COUNCIL



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sources for capital projects slated for 2009 to 2014 ([2008-80](#)).

Performance audits

Audits were conducted on indigent veterans' needs, substance abuse treatment and jail population, felony court reform,

Superior Court backlog, pet licensing, [Criminal Justice Task Force](#) report on jail-space needs, stormwater discharge permit requirements, and court reporters.

Sewers

The county's six-year Sewer Improvement Program charts proposed sewer-system upgrades from 2009 to 2014 ([2008-90](#)).

Sign-code enforcement

As an exception to the sign-code enforcement program, interim rules (ending April 1, 2009) allow certain temporary, portable commercial signs in the county right-of-way ([2008-56s](#)).

Solid waste

The council authorized the County Executive to execute an agreement with LRI for solid-waste handling and disposal services through 2036. The contract will give the council more authority to review rate increases, establish new performance measures for the Graham landfill, and provide greater investment in recycling to help decrease the garbage sent to the landfill by two-thirds ([R2008-117](#)).

In addition, the council adopted a 2008 supplement to the Tacoma-Pierce County Solid Waste Management Plan that sets out the strategies by which the county will reduce disposed waste by 75 percent: increased

composting of most organics; convenient recycling and diversion for businesses and individuals; and recovery of resources. ([2008-57s2](#)).

Storm water improvements

The six-year Storm Water Improvement Program charts planned improvements to the county's storm water infrastructure from 2009 to 2014 ([2008-105](#)).

Storm water discharge

An ordinance amended the "Illicit Stormwater Discharge" chapter of the County Code governing runoff from construction projects ([2008-59s](#)).

Tacoma Narrows Airport

Pierce County and the Peninsula Metropolitan Park District jointly purchased – from the city of Tacoma – the Tacoma Narrows Airport and the Madrona Links Golf Course in Gig Harbor ([2008-74s](#), [R2008-181](#)) ([VIDEO](#)).

Term limits

See [Charter Amendment](#)

Traffic safety

The council's 2009 budget creates a program to install automated traffic safety cameras at six intersections to catch red-light runners ([2008-95s2](#)).

Transportation

The council amended the six-year Transportation Improvement Program for 2009 to 2014 and the 14-year ferry program for 2009 to 2022 ([2008-76s](#)).