



SCA Public Issues Committee

MINUTES

September 10, 2025 – 7:00 PM

Mercer Island Community & Event Center

1. Welcome and Roll Call

Covington Councilmember, Joseph Cimaomo, Jr., Public Issues Committee (PIC) Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM. 19 cities were represented. ([Attachment A](#)).

Guests present included: David White, Algona (PIC Alternate); Traci Buxton, Des Moines, SCA Board President; Katie Halse, Bellevue Staff; Jared Hill, Woodinville Staff; Tania Mondaca, King County Staff; John Sheller, King County Library Systems; Heidi Daniel, King County Library Systems; Chase Gallagher, King County Library Systems; Christian Sinderman, NWP Consulting.

2. Public Comment

Covington Councilmember, Joseph Cimaomo, Jr., PIC Vice Chair, asked if there was anyone in attendance who would like to provide public comment.

Hearing none, Vice Chair Cimaomo closed this portion of the meeting.

3. Approval of Minutes – July 9, 2025 Meeting

Covington Councilmember, Joseph Cimaomo, Jr., PIC Vice Chair asked for any questions or amendments to the minutes of the July 9, 2025 SCA PIC meeting.

Mayor Kelli Curtis, Kirkland, moved, seconded by Deputy Mayor Harry Steinmetz, Des Moines, to approve the minutes of the July 9, 2025 SCA PIC Meeting. The motion passed.

4. Chair's Report

Covington Councilmember, Joseph Cimaomo, Jr., PIC Vice Chair, had no items to report.

5. Executive Director's Report

SCA Executive Director Robert Feldstein expressed that fall is a transition time, when he is watching budgets coming out of the County, elections, and thinking about the committee appointment process for next year. He added that SCA's work extends beyond advocacy to governing and being at the table for conversation, and that appointees to committees will receive support from SCA policy staff. Feldstein encouraged members to spread the word as committee applications are released.

Feldstein expressed excitement on SCA's progress on getting PIC to be more active, and thanked King County Library System staff for engaging proactively with PIC.

6. Debrief: Sound Transit Tour of Mercer Station

Covington Councilmember, Joseph Cimaomo, Jr., PIC Vice Chair, asked members to share their experience of the tour for those who could not attend.

Deputy Mayor Harry Steinmetz, Des Moines, shared that he found the station impressive and that it reminds him of stations he has seen in Asia, where platforms are longer. He expressed that the tour was nice and informative, and shared excitement that the map in the station has a portion that will be removed when the stations in South King County open later this year.

Councilmember Melissa Stuart, Redmond, expressed excitement that the 2 Line will connect to the northern portion of the 1 Line and stated that she appreciates the ease of access.

SCA Executive Director Robert Feldstein thanked Stuart for her prior suggestion to hold a tour of the Mercer Island Station ahead of the PIC meeting in Mercer Island.

Cimaomo shared his excitement at the upcoming and recent station openings.

7. King County Library System (KCLS) Levy Lid Lift

Presentation by Heidi Daniel, Executive Director, King County Library System (KCLS). Materials attached and available [here](#) .

Covington Councilmember, Joseph Cimaomo, Jr., PIC Vice Chair, encouraged members of PIC to give early feedback regarding the potential King County Library System (KCLS) levy lid lift.

John Sheller, Government Relations Manager, KCLS, introduced himself and other KCLS staff. He also introduced KCLS, sharing that it is not part of the King County government. KCLS serves 35 of the 38 member cities and the unincorporated areas of King County; they are an associate member of SCA. Sheller shared that KCLS conducted leader interviews regarding the potential KCLS Levy Lid Lift.

Daniel introduced herself and shared her excitement for getting feedback from PIC members. She overviewed that KCLS has 50 locations throughout King County. Daniel shared that 1 out of 2 households are active cardholders, meaning they utilized their library card within the last year. When fully staffed, KCLS can have up to 1058 employees. They have a seven-member Board of Trustees that is appointed by the King County Council. She also shared that over 20 million items were circulated in the last year, with over \$310 million in retail value.

KCLS has an annual budget of \$164.5 million, with 96% of those funds coming from a property tax levy. KCLS receives limited state funds, and all federal grants were recently revoked. The KCLS Foundation also serves as a financial support for the system. Sixty percent of the annual budget is spent on library operations and collections, which includes items such as staff and electricity. Thirty percent of the budget is spent on administration, and ten percent is spent on facilities and capital investments. In 2024, KCLS was projected to go into the negative, but they were able to avoid touching reserves through careful budgeting. That is not likely to be the case in 2025.

In 2010, KCLS restored their levy to \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Over time, as assessed values have gone up, their rate has been driven down; it currently is \$0.2452 per \$1,000. In 2020, the Board planned a levy lid lift knowing they were about to hit their reserves. COVID-19 mandated closures, meaning hours were pulled back dramatically, resulting in funding being saved and put in reserves. The levy lid lift was re-evaluated in 2022 but did not move forward due to general uncertainty during COVID-19 recovery. Currently, KCLS is evaluating a levy lid lift in 2026. They have begun having community conversations, including with SCA members, regarding a levy lid lift.

Daniel shared that KCLS's goals include expanding evening and weekend hours, maintaining and refreshing aging buildings, and enhancing their collection to reduce hold times and balance digital items. She added that they do not expect physical circulation to decrease, but they expect digital circulation to increase. KCLS wants to ensure they have spaces for children's activities, working spaces, and can conduct necessary maintenance for the buildings. Potential risks of not doing a lid lift include eliminating weekend hours, reducing collection availability, and evaluating of immediate cost reductions.

Without a lid lift, KCLS will run out of reserves in 2027, requiring services to be significantly pulled back. Daniel then shared three potential levy scenarios. The first includes raising the levy lid by \$0.50, which is far more than adequate for KCLS's needs and would not be considered unless the community asks for it. The second scenario is raising the levy lid by \$0.35, which is nearly status quo, meaning the budget would be funded but there would be no expansions, reductions would be needed as time goes on, and another lid lift would be required in a few more years. The third scenario is raising the levy lid by \$0.45, which has growth in mind, meaning that they have room to expand (such as expanding homework help and other learning programs as well as constructing building changes) and would not need to revisit the levy for 8-10 years.

KCLS is completing their community survey by the end of this month and will make a recommendation regarding the levy lid lift to the Board by the end of the year. The Board would be expected to decide in early 2026, with a target of the lid lift being on the ballot during the August primary election.

Councilmember Sid Gupta, Sammamish, asked if the growth mindset of the \$0.45 levy lid lift scenario includes additional locations with population growth or if it is strictly maintenance. Daniel replied that KCLS does not have a specific plan in mind and are currently meeting with cities to discuss where cities are expanding. KCLS would be thinking about how to meet those current needs and are waiting for cities to make their plans. She shared that options for expansion include converting a self-serve stand to a full-service location or adding non-staffed access points for areas that don't have physical locations or have a location that is outside of the growth area.

Gupta also asked Daniels to clarify how hold time ratios are decided. Daniel replied that for every 9 people that place a hold on a book, KCLS buys a copy. This ratio of holds to items is increased or decreased based on funding. KCLS is aiming for a 5-to-1 ratio.

Deputy Mayor Harry Steinmetz, Des Moines, asked whether a scenario for a 40-cent levy lid lift was considered. Daniel shared that a 40-cent lid lift would allow for some expansion of hours or locations but would result in another levy lid lift being on the ballot in 6-8 years or KCLS making choices to avoid another lift, such as not expanding hours as much or adding less money to the collection.

Councilmember Lydia Assefa-Dawson, Federal Way, asked whether libraries would have to close if no levy lid lift happens. Daniel replied that this would be the case, though KCLS would first have an immediate rollback of weekend hours in 2027 and re-evaluate capital projects. She clarified that closing libraries would occur in the outyears of their forecast. Assefa-Dawson then asked how it would be decided which locations would close. Daniel said that if closures were required following reduction in hours, KCLS would look at equity considerations, such as the community reaching another library or whether the location a critical spot for children after school or for seniors.

Assefa-Dawson also asked about whether KCLS is considering digital equity. Daniel replied that wi-fi use at libraries is high, that KCLS hosts computer literacy courses, and that KCLS recently received a grant to explore AI in light of digital equity concerns. She stated digital equity will continue to be a priority for KCLS.

Councilmember Melissa Stuart, Redmond, asked about whether KCLS has an appetite for growth in types of circulation, citing interest in her community for circulation of items like e-bikes or mobility devices. Daniel shared that the Foundation applied for a grant to circulate mobility devices, and KCLS is very interested in this work. KCLS would like to work with the community to determine the best items to circulate. She also shared KCLS already has some non-traditional circulation such as hiking or museum passes or their makerspaces, which KCLS would like to expand.

Mayor Kelli Curtis, Kirkland, expressed that it is important for KCLS to highlight not only collection expansion, but that libraries serve as third spaces for the community. Curtis asked what percentage of budget was made up of federal grants. Daniel shared that federal grants were a small component of the budget; one grant was for climate change planning in their buildings, and the only item remaining on it was outreach with Tribes. She also shared that the state lost federal funding, and interconnectedness of library systems might mean KCLS faces impacts of this, though 96% of KCLS's budget is from the levy.

Mayor Traci Buxton, Des Moines, asked whether there is an opportunity for other pools of funding like partnering and co-locating with another organization, such as where 30% of the building is for another service to serve as a funding source. Daniel replied that KCLS can look into this, but is hesitant to lease half of the building to a nonprofit for the purpose of being a source of funding. This is because it is an uncertain funding source, especially if the nonprofit loses their funding. She shared this may be an avenue to co-locate services for the community but would not work as a stable funding source.

Daniel shared that she is available to speak with cities and answer questions.

8. KCTD: Prep for Upcoming King County Council Discussion

Presentation by SCA Executive Director Robert Feldstein. Materials attached and available [here](#) .

Feldstein reviewed that the King County Transportation District (KCTD) Board had planned to propose a 10-year 0.1% sales and use tax, where revenues would be distributed evenly between roads (focused on high-priority road and bridge projects) and metro (focused on safety and security upgrades for operators and riders). In response, SCA took emergency action to write a letter. Following the letter, the decision was postponed and King County Councilmember Sarah Perry wrote a response. She also is conducting outreach to a small group of SCA members. SCA also received a response letter from the Seattle Building Trades expressing that the group supports the tax as they feel County roads and bridges are in need and delaying investments increases cost; they also cited that the work funded by the tax would create jobs.

Feldstein also overviewed the budget challenges faced by the Roads Services Division, as they are facing a large funding gap which will result in their dedicated funding for capital projects being exhausted in 2029. He also overviewed the budget challenges faced by King County Metro, which is also facing a funding gap that could result in \$18 billion total in unfunded capital costs by 2050.

Feldstein reviewed that SCA staff met with SCA leadership and representatives of transportation caucuses the morning of this PIC meeting. He shared that members support a pause in implementing the KCTD sales tax, particularly in light of tax fatigue, and that they would like to see a revenue sharing options with cities and generally want to develop a funding solution in collaboration with cities. He asked PIC members to share why they feel the KCTD sales tax is not a suitable solution at this time and if they have ideas to address these issues going forward.

Mayor Kelli Curtis, Kirkland, asked which caucuses were involved in this morning's meetings. SCA Senior Policy Analyst Aj Foltz clarified that caucus leadership from SCA's Regional Transit Committee and Transportation Policy Board were involved.

Curtis shared that Kirkland is an advocate for revenue sharing and has discussed potentially 20% of revenue going to cities. She suggested that SCA brings calculations of where the revenue from the tax is coming from and what revenue sharing could look like to meetings with Councilmember Perry to support this proposal.

Deputy Mayor Sue-Ann Hohimer, Normandy Park, stated that her city council expressed concern around tax fatigue and will be prioritizing funding needs in their city due to fiscal constraints. Hohimer shared that King County needs to be mindful that the County is running a jobs program.

Councilmember Jon Lebo, Lake Forest Park, asked if a car tab tax increase is under consideration as an alternative. Feldstein replied that he has not heard discussion around this.

Hohimer expressed concern around how this tax, particularly in combination with the upcoming public safety sales tax, will be implemented and impact South King County.

Mayor Nigel Herbig, Kenmore, shared that County taxes are often regressive and that it is worth considering a car tab tax option, though those are often unpopular.

Councilmember Melissa Stuart, Redmond, shared that she opposed the tax in hopes of choosing a less regressive option and is in favor of keeping a car tab tax on the table. She stated that she hopes the group representing SCA can have a conversation that goes beyond opposing the tax and looks toward a long-term partnership. Feldstein agrees that SCA should be willing to say yes more often.

Councilmember Mark Joselyn, North Bend, shared that he was impressed with the response from Councilmember Perry, as everyone is traveling on County roads and that the issues on this topic are real. He stated that he was pleased that the focus is on coming together to find a solution, rather than solely expressing a hard no.

9. New Indigent Defense Caseload Standards: SCA Draft Letter

Presentation by SCA Senior Policy Analyst Aj Foltz. Materials attached and available [here](#) .

Foltz overviewed the caseload limits for public defenders, which was approved by the Washington State Bar Association. These standards will reduce the number of cases public defenders can take on and will be phased in over a 10-year period. At the July PIC meeting, PIC agreed that SCA should take collective action on this topic. PIC members' main concern included the budget impact of the new standards on cities, and felt that SCA should ask for the standards to be delayed (but not changed) and for guidance from the state on retention and recruitment strategies for public defenders. Members also expressed a desire for SCA to partner with the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) while developing a letter.

Originally, PIC considered taking emergency action, but SCA staff instead recommend PIC to follow the traditional two-touch rule as there is time before the standards go into effect. The goal is for PIC members to vote to take action at this PIC meeting. If PIC chooses to take action, members would send feedback on the draft letter in advance of the October PIC meeting, where PIC would vote to recommend a final letter to the SCA Board of Directors, who would approve it at their October meeting.

Since the July PIC meeting, SCA staff met with AWC and Gordon Thomas Honeywell, distributed a survey to members, and drafted and distributed a letter (found on page 27 of the PIC packet, linked [here](#)). SCA staff have received sixteen responses to the survey and are continuing to collect responses; Foltz encouraged members to complete the survey. She shared the data will be used to inform the letter and potentially for further research by SCA staff. Foltz then overviewed findings of the current survey responses, including operational impacts of the caseload standards. These impacts include complexities with scheduling, delayed proceedings, frequent reassignments, additional discovery requests, prolonged cases, and an unwillingness to resolve cases. In response to these impacts, respondents are considering implementing new taxes, increasing fees, cutting other parts of the city budget, charging fewer crimes, seeking grant funding, and other steps.

Foltz shared that since quorum was lost prior to this item, the originally planned vote on whether PIC will take up this item for action will not occur, though discussion can proceed.

Deputy Mayor Harry Steinmetz, Des Moines, shared that SCA needs an understanding of how cities are currently funding public defender contracts, as cities are not in a position to ask how to get more defenders in the pipeline if we do not know how this is done. He shared counties have a more effective way of funding and recruiting public defenders and are looking at around a 10% increase in public defenders over the next 10 years to meet the standards. He suggested SCA and member cities look at the Washington Office of Public Defense as a conduit and apply for funds that are hopefully coming from the state legislature, as this is an unfunded mandate for cities.

Mayor Kelli Curtis, Kirkland, expressed support for taking action on this item and complimented Feldstein on SCA's more active stances since he has joined. She asked where AWC fits into this dynamic. Foltz replied that SCA met with AWC, and that AWC recently sent their own letter on this topic. Katie Halse, Assistant Director of Intergovernmental Relations, Bellevue, added that the AWC Legislative Priorities Committee added this item as one of their top four legislative priorities. Curtis shared she feels SCA and AWC should be a united front. She suggested the letter highlight that the study cited in reference to the new standards is a national study that is not specific to Washington state. Curtis also stated the letter should suggest the legislature fund a study specific to Washington state.

Councilmember Melissa Stuart, Redmond, expressed appreciation for the conversations at PIC on this item, and shared that she and other SCA PIC members were able to bring those perspectives to the AWC Legislative Priorities Committee meeting.

SCA Executive Director Robert Feldstein echoed that he has heard concerns around the lack of a state-specific study. He cautioned members on the feasibility of such a study.

Councilmember Tola Marts, Issaquah, relayed that Issaquah has had concerns about the new caseload standards for some time and is grateful that SCA is active on this matter and becoming more active generally.

Foltz reviewed the timeline and next steps. The SCA Board of Directors will review the letter at their next meeting. PIC members can propose edits to the letter by sending them to her and/or Feldstein by September 29. An updated draft of the letter will be presented at the October PIC meeting for a vote. If PIC votes to recommend the letter to the Board of Directors, the Board of Directors will vote whether to adopt it at their October 16 meeting.

Feldstein asked whether this counts as a first touch given the lack of quorum. Foltz answered that she will defer to Covington Councilmember, Joseph Cimaomo, Jr., PIC Vice Chair, and PIC as a whole. Cimaomo said he felt this discussion counted as a first touch; members agreed.

10. Updates/Informational Items

Presentation by SCA Senior Policy Analyst Aj Foltz. Materials attached and available [here](#) .

Foltz provided early ideas for SCA's State Legislative Agenda and County Priorities Agenda. She explained that the SCA Board of Directors will soon elect the Legislative Committee and that PIC would be updated as the agendas are developed.

Feldstein shared that SCA is now considering County Priorities as SCA has a stronger voice at the County level.

Councilmember Tola Marts, Issaquah, shared that Issaquah is very concerned about public safety and wondered whether there are state or county policies SCA can advocate for that would allow cities to promote public safety and navigate the changing relationship with federal law enforcement.

Councilmember Melissa Stuart, Redmond, appreciated the suggestion to add a County Priorities Agenda. She shared that AWC's Legislative Priorities Committee decided to ask the state to give cities more funding options to use to address concerns around food security and public health in light of budget constraints.

Councilmember David Edwards, Woodinville, expressed that he thinks developing a County Priorities Agenda is great, particularly as the County landscape changes.

Deputy Mayor Harry Steinmetz, Des Moines, stated that he thinks County taxing policy and collaborating with the County to deliver necessary services should be one of our priorities.

Deputy Mayor Sue-Ann Hohimer, Normandy Park, thinks emergency preparedness should be an item on the County Priorities Agenda, as it is important to ensure jurisdictional relationships are strong, plans are in place, and residents feel prepared in case of a crisis.

Mark Joselyn shared trucking is an issue of state-wide significance, as many trucks go through North Bend, which may involve a change in the growth management boundary.

Foltz thanked PIC members for their feedback.

Subsequently, Foltz opened the floor for questions on the SCA Regional Boards and Committee Updates memo. Seeing none, she summarized recent updates on the Regional Policy Committee's (RPC) discussions on the Mental Illness and Drug Dependence (MIDD) Renewal Ordinance. Foltz shared that the SCA RPC Caucus proposed an alternative ordinance renewing the MIDD sales tax for two years instead of the originally proposed nine-year renewal period. She welcomed questions via email. Foltz also requested feedback around converting the memo on this item to focus on upcoming agenda items; PIC members supported this change.

Foltz also gave an update about SCA's recently launched newsletter and encouraged cities to submit city wins.

Foltz also asked members to submit their ballot measures and levies to her to be included on the tracker shared with PIC.

Covington Councilmember, Joseph Cimaomo, Jr., PIC Vice Chair, shared that Covington is considering developing a parks district and is now fact-finding to determine resident's interest in this item.

11. For the Good of the Order

Covington Councilmember, Joseph Cimaomo, Jr., PIC Vice Chair, shared that Covington is hosting drive-in movies throughout the month.

Councilmember Tola Marts, Issaquah, shared that Issaquah will be hosting their Salmon Days on October 4 and 5.

Councilmember Tracy Taylor-Turner shared that Auburn is hosting a Hops and Crops event this weekend.

Deputy Mayor Harry Steinmetz, Des Moines, shared that Des Moines is hosting an Oktoberfest on September 20 and 21.

Councilmember Sid Gupta, Sammamish, shared that there will be a Salish Sunset Salmon Hatchery event in Issaquah this weekend.

Councilmember Syd Dawson, Maple Valley, shared that Maple Valley is hosting a Hope Walk on September 20 to fundraise for cancer research, and is hosting a Lake Wilderness Park Zombie Dash on October 18.

Cimaomo shared that Covington is hosting a Mayor's Day of Concern Food Drive on September 20 benefitting the Covington Storehouse, which also will be hosting an upcoming auction and gala. He also shared that Covington has an upcoming Makers' Market.

12. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:47 PM.