

Summary of Proposed Ordinance relating to Water systems, water system plans, and general sewer plans updates 2026

This summary fulfills Washington State Growth Management Act and King County Code (K.C.C.) 20.18.100 requirements for a “plain language summary.”

The goals of the proposed ordinance are to: 1) implement King County Comprehensive Plan Action 14 from the 2024 Comprehensive Plan, which adds review criteria for water system planning on Vashon-Maury Island; 2) update groundwater withdrawal code standards pursuant to Chapter 19.27 RCW and Chapter 90.94 RCW (instated in response to the *Whatcom County v. Hirst*, *Futurewise*, et al. decision); 3) update the timing of required water system plan and general sewer plan submittal; and 4) update the King County Code for internal consistency and usability.

Ordinance Section	King County Code Section	Current Code	Proposed Change	Intent/Rationale
1	K.C.C. 6.27.060	Sets criteria for County approval of franchises.	Updates terminology for general sewer plans and water system plans.	Throughout, the terms “water system plan” and “general sewer plan” are proposed to be used in order to be consistent with WAC 246-290-100 and WAC 173-240-050 respectively.
2	K.C.C. 13.24.005	States the purpose of K.C.C. chapter 13.24.	Updates terminology for general sewer plans and water system plans.	Throughout, the terms “water system plan” and “general sewer plan” are proposed to be used in order to be consistent with WAC 246-290-100 and WAC 173-240-050 respectively.
3	13.24.007	Lists definitions for terms used in K.C.C. 13.24	<p>Adds definitions for "general sewer plan", "permit-exempt well", "small water system management program", "satellite management agency plan", and "water system plan".</p> <p>Updates definitions of "individual water system" and "public water system".</p> <p>Proposes to use the term "private well" instead of "individual water system".</p>	<p>The definitions for "general sewer plan", "small water system management program", "satellite management agency plan", and "water system plan" are proposed to be added to clarify that these are distinct, specific documents that have different code standards that apply to them.</p> <p>The definition for "permit-exempt well" is proposed to be added because there are standards proposed to be included in this ordinance that confirm compliance with the <i>Whatcom County v. Hirst</i> decision and subsequent updates to the RCW. Adding this definition makes it clear which types of wells the new standards apply to. This definition mirrors the standards in RCW 90.44.050, which set requirements for when a permit to withdraw groundwater is required.</p>

Ordinance Section	King County Code Section	Current Code	Proposed Change	Intent/Rationale
				<p>The definition of "individual water system" is proposed to be updated to be consistent with King County Board of Health code 12.08.170, which includes both accessory dwelling units and a temporary medical hardship residence as part of "single-family residences" that use a private well.</p> <p>The definition of "public water system" is proposed to be updated to avoid duplicative language.</p> <p>The definition of "individual water system" is proposed to be revised and changed to "private well" because "individual water system" encompasses both "private well" and alternative water systems like rainwater catchment. Existing and proposed standards in K.C.C. 13.24 are tied to private wells, not individual water systems. Therefore "private well" is the appropriate term to use in this chapter.</p>
4	13.24.010	Lists the activities necessitating a water system and general sewer plans approved by King County, the timing of when plans must be submitted to King County, and the role of the utilities technical review committee.	<p>Updates terminology for general sewer plans and water system plans.</p> <p>Makes changes to clarify existing intent regarding which plans must be submitted to King County.</p> <p>Makes changes to no longer require general sewer plans and water system plans for right-of-way franchises or right-of-way construction permits when a utility is solely seeking conveyance through unincorporated King County right-of-way.</p> <p>Moves some subsections to 13.24.060.</p> <p>Updates timing on which general sewer, water system, and other plans are required to be submitted to King County.</p>	<p>Throughout, the terms "water system plan" and "general sewer plan" are proposed to be used in order to be consistent with WAC 246-290-100 and WAC 173-240-050 respectively.</p> <p>Existing language in this section implies (although it does not say) that all entities have to have plans approved by King County, not just those that are required to have plans by the state. For example, under both existing and proposed code, small water system management plans do not need to be adopted by council as a prerequisite for the activities listed in subsection A.1. thru A.4.</p> <p>Cases where a utility is solely seeking conveyance through unincorporated King County right-of-way are proposed to be excluded from the requirement to prepare and submit general sewer and water</p>

Ordinance Section	King County Code Section	Current Code	Proposed Change	Intent/Rationale
				<p>system plans, because the information in these plans is not needed to approve franchises or right-of-way construction permits, and the preparation of plans is a significant expense to utilities.</p> <p>Proposes to move two subsections containing plan review standards to K.C.C. 13.24.060 in order to keep all review standards together in one section.</p> <p>The timing on which general sewer, water system, and other plans are required to be submitted to King County is proposed to be revised to match Washington state Dept. of Health requirements. The existing wording requires smaller water purveyors to submit plans more frequently than required by the Dept. of Health and general sewer plans more frequently than required by the Dept. of Ecology for no added value. The changes also incorporate a recommendation from the King County Auditor's Office report "Staff Capacity and Project Complexity Limit Right-of-Way Revenue". It notes that the existing K.C.C. requires plans to be no more than six years old to get a franchise, but the Washington state Dept. of Health allows plans to be up to ten years old. The Dept. of Health changed its requirement from six to ten years in 2017, but the County has not yet revised its code to reflect this change. There is no added value to requiring plans more frequently than the Dept. of Health, and requiring plans on a shorter cycle imposes significant cost on water purveyors and time from County staff to review.</p>
5	13.24.035	Sets standards for where public sewer service must be provided.	Updates terminology for general sewer plans and water system plans.	Throughout, the terms "water system plan" and "general sewer plan" are proposed to be used in order to be consistent with WAC 246-290-100 and WAC 173-240-050 respectively.
6	13.24.050	Provides allowance for submitting a general sewer plan for a subarea.	Updates terminology for general sewer plans and water system plans.	Throughout, the terms "water system plan" and "general sewer plan" are proposed to

Ordinance Section	King County Code Section	Current Code	Proposed Change	Intent/Rationale
				be used in order to be consistent with WAC 246-290-100 and WAC 173-240-050 respectively.
7	13.24.060	Provides the criteria with which general sewer plans and water system plans must be consistent.	<p>Updates terminology for general sewer plans and water system plans.</p> <p>Reorders code criteria so that criteria that apply to general sewer plans, water system plans, and both kinds of plans are grouped together.</p> <p>Adds new review criteria for plans that include service areas within the Vashon Coordinated Water System Planning area.</p>	<p>Throughout, the terms “water system plan” and “general sewer plan” are proposed to be used in order to be consistent with WAC 246-290-100 and WAC 173-240-050 respectively.</p> <p>Code criteria are proposed to be reordered to improve code clarity and usability. By grouping like criteria with like, it will be easier for code users to confirm that all applicable criteria have been met.</p> <p>Makes the code changes requested by King County Comprehensive Plan Action 14. The criteria are tied to the Vashon Coordinated Water System Planning area because King County Comprehensive Plan Action 14 speaks to Vashon-Maury Island as being “one of four areas in unincorporated King County declared a Critical Water Supply Area”. K.C.C. 13.28.010 specifies a mapped geography on Vashon-Maury Island that is the critical water supply area. This added language maintains internal consistency within the code.</p>
8	13.24.090	Sets out the authority of the utilities technical review committee.	<p>Updates terminology for general sewer plans and water system plans, makes other wording changes.</p> <p>Revises a code cross-reference.</p> <p>Adds review of small water system management programs and satellite management agency plans when requested to do so by the Washington state Department of Health to the list of items in this section.</p>	<p>Throughout, the terms “water system plan” and “general sewer plan” are proposed to be used in order to be consistent with WAC 246-290-100 and WAC 173-240-050 respectively. Other wording changes are intended to be clarifying and to align with the County legislation drafting guide.</p> <p>Updating a cross reference. K.C.C. 13.<u>20</u>.020 was repealed in 2002 and was about “fee for report”. K.C.C. 13.<u>02</u>.020 speaks to tribal notification, which is the topic of this subsection and therefore the appropriate cross reference.</p> <p>The Washington state Dept. of Health requests local governments to confirm</p>

Ordinance Section	King County Code Section	Current Code	Proposed Change	Intent/Rationale
				consistency between small water system management programs and satellite management agency plans and their comprehensive plans before issuing state approval. King County's review is only technical and does not allow water withdrawal or growth that could not otherwise happen.
9	New section	n/a	Adds requirement for satellite management agency plans provided for County approval to be consistent with specified provisions of the Washington Administrative Code and to provide information about contractors who can respond to emergencies if the agency does not have a physical office in King County	King County is required to review satellite management agency plans, but there are no code criteria specific to these kinds of plans. The criteria in this new section are proposed to be added based on UTRC feedback to address a risk of inadequate emergency response in cases where a water system in King County is owned or managed by a satellite management agency in another part of the state. Providing a list of local contractors in plans aims to require more accountability on the parts of satellite management agencies.
10	13.24.100	Sets standards for formation of the utilities and technical review committee, its review of plans, and its meeting procedures.	Updates terminology for general sewer plans and water system plans.	Throughout, the terms "water system plan" and "general sewer plan" are proposed to be used in order to be consistent with WAC 246-290-100 and WAC 173-240-050 respectively.
11	13.24.132	Sets standards for new sewer facilities in rural and natural resource lands.	Updates terminology for general sewer plans and water system plans.	Throughout, the terms "water system plan" and "general sewer plan" are proposed to be used in order to be consistent with WAC 246-290-100 and WAC 173-240-050 respectively.
12	13.24.134	Sets standards on where sewer service may be provided.	Updates terminology for general sewer plans and water system plans.	Throughout, the terms "water system plan" and "general sewer plan" are proposed to be used in order to be consistent with WAC 246-290-100 and WAC 173-240-050 respectively.
13	13.24.136	Sets standards for on-site sewage treatment systems.	Makes various clarifying wording changes. .	Wording updated to match other references to the recording process elsewhere in this ordinance, align with King County's legislation drafting guide, and to clarify existing intent.
14	13.24.138	Sets standards for water facilities in rural areas	Revises wording Adds standards for permit-exempt wells	Wording revisions are proposed to keep the code internally consistent.

Ordinance Section	King County Code Section	Current Code	Proposed Change	Intent/Rationale
				Proposes standards for permit-exempt wells pursuant to Chapter 19.27 RCW and Chapter 90.94 RCW (instated in response to the <i>Whatcom County v. Hirst, Futurewise, et al.</i> decision) and matching existing practice.
15	13.24.140	Sets standards for interim alternative water service	Clarifies that "substantial improvements" are treated like new development for the purpose of verifying appropriate water supply. Adds standards for permit-exempt wells.	"Substantial improvement" is used consistently throughout the K.C.C. as the threshold at which changes to existing development are treated like new development. Proposes standards for permit-exempt wells pursuant to Chapter 19.27 RCW and Chapter 90.94 RCW (instated in response to the <i>Whatcom County v. Hirst, Futurewise, et al.</i> decision) and matching existing practice.
16	21A.06.057	Definition of Alternative water sources	Proposes to remove the provision stating that alternative water sources are not potable.	This provision is deleted in order to accommodate a provision in King County board of health code Sec. 13.04.070, which allows rainwater catchment as an approved water source if other options would cause undue hardship. The proposed removal of "such water is not considered potable" in this definition enables rainwater to be used in these hardship cases.
17	n/a	n/a	Repeals K.C.C. 13.24.015	K.C.C. 13.24.015 proposed for repeal because Public Health - Seattle & King County no longer has a Group B water system program, so these reviews are done by the state Dept. of Health.