



Legislation Text

File #: CB 120911, Version: 1

CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL _____

AN ORDINANCE relating to the Seattle Channel; stating the City Council’s intent to establish dedicated and ongoing funding sources for the operating and capital costs of the Seattle Channel; and requesting that the Executive submit a funding plan by September 3, 2025.

WHEREAS, responsibility for The City of Seattle’s municipal television station, which would later become the Seattle Channel, was transferred from the Seattle Public Library to the Executive group responsible for the City’s website in 1997; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Channel remains administratively within the City department known as Seattle Information Technology; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1996, the City entered into franchise agreements with cable television providers that included new franchise fees as compensation for the right to locate equipment in the public right-of-way; and

WHEREAS, in 2001, the City Council adopted Resolution 30379 that established financial policies for General Fund Subfunds, including a subfund that received the cable franchise fee revenues; and

WHEREAS, one of the eligible uses for the franchise fee revenues was support for the City’s government access television channel, including both operations and capital equipment; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, the City Council, via Ordinance 125492, created the Cable Television Franchise Fund and specified that all revenues from cable franchise fees shall be deposited into the fund; and

WHEREAS, cable franchise fee revenues have been declining for a number of years and are predicted to continue declining in future years; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Channel is in need of dedicated funding sources to ensure that the station's governmental, arts, cultural, and community programming can continue uninterrupted; and

WHEREAS, the Council intends to collaborate with the Executive to establish an advisory workgroup to explore alternative financing and operating models for the Seattle Channel; and

WHEREAS, the Council desires the Executive to propose a sustainable funding plan to cover the needs of the Seattle Channel to ensure that its governmental and non-governmental programming does not become reliant upon external parties or funding sources; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. The City Council intends to establish a dedicated and ongoing funding plan sufficient to meet the operating and capital needs of the Seattle Channel, such that the Seattle Channel may continue to provide essential governmental programming and the types of civic, cultural, and community programming that the Seattle Channel currently produces. When established, the funding plan should include, but does not need to be limited to, the following sources:

A. Cable franchise fees. At least 50 percent, but no less than \$1.7 million, of cable franchise fee revenues in each year should be dedicated to the Seattle Channel.

B. Seattle Information Technology (Seattle IT) cost allocation. Seattle IT should incorporate a portion of the Seattle Channel's expenses into its cost allocation model. Seattle IT should determine what portion of the Seattle Channel's programming and expenditures are in support of the services and priorities of other City departments, and those departments should be charged appropriately.

C. General Fund. The General Fund should be used exclusively for the coverage of meetings, press conferences, and other public events of the City Council and other City of Seattle elected officials.

Section 2. The Executive is requested to present a funding plan consistent with this ordinance and transmit any legislation necessary to implement the plan to the City Council by September 3, 2025. The City Council anticipates that, in creating the funding plan, the Executive will utilize the research and

recommendations of any advisory workgroups established to study the Seattle Channel's operations and financing.

Section 3. This ordinance shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Sections 1.04.020 and 1.04.070.

Passed by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2024, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of _____, 2024.

President _____ of the City Council

Approved / returned unsigned / vetoed this _____ day of _____, 2024.

Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2024.

Scheereen Dedman, City Clerk

(Seal)