

**Chapter 57.04 RCW  
FORMATION AND DISSOLUTION**

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*Dissolution of inactive special purpose districts: Chapter 36.96 RCW.*

**RCW 57.04.001 Actions subject to review by boundary review board.** Actions taken under this chapter may be subject to potential review by a boundary review board under chapter 36.93 RCW. [1996 c 230 § 201; 1989 c 84 § 56.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

**RCW 57.04.020 Districts authorized.** Water-sewer districts are authorized to be established for the purposes of chapter 57.08 RCW. Such districts may include within their boundaries one or more counties, cities, and towns, or other political subdivisions. However, no portion or all of any city or town may be included without the consent by resolution of the city or town legislative authority. [1996 c 230 § 202; 1982 1st ex.s. c 17 § 9; 1929 c 114 § 1; RRS § 11579. Cf. 1913 c 161 § 1.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

**RCW 57.04.030 Petition procedure—Hearing—Boundaries.** (1) For the purpose of formation of water-sewer districts, a petition shall be presented to the county legislative authority of each county in which the proposed district is located. The petition shall set forth the reasons for the creation of the district, designate the boundaries of the district, and state that establishment of the district will be

conducive to the public health, convenience, and welfare and will be of benefit to the property included in the district. The petition shall state the proposed name of the district, which may be ". . . . . Sewer-Water [Water-Sewer] District," ". . . . . Water District," ". . . . . Sewer District," or may be designated by a number such as ". . . . . County Water-Sewer District No. . . . ." The petition shall specify the proposed property tax levy assessment, if any, which shall not exceed one dollar and twenty-five cents per thousand dollars of assessed value, for general preliminary expenses of the district. The petition shall be signed by at least ten percent of the registered voters who voted in the last municipal general election, who shall be qualified voters on the date of filing the petition, residing within the district described in the petition.

The petition shall be filed with the county auditor of the county in which all or the largest geographic portion of the proposed district is located, who shall within ten days examine and verify the signatures on the petition. No person having signed such a petition shall be allowed to withdraw the person's name from the petition after the filing of the petition with the county auditor. If the area proposed to be included in the district is located in more than one county, the auditor of the county in which the largest geographic portion of the district is located shall be the lead auditor and shall immediately transfer a copy of the petitions to the auditor of each other county in which the proposed district is located. Within ten days after the lead auditor received the petition, the auditors of these other counties shall certify to the lead auditor: (a) The number of voters of that county residing in the proposed district who voted at the last municipal general election; and (b) the number of valid signatures on the petition of voters of that county residing in the proposed district. The lead auditor shall certify the sufficiency of the petition after receiving this information. If the petition shall be found to contain a sufficient number of signatures, the county auditor or lead county auditor shall then transmit it, together with a certificate of sufficiency attached thereto to the county legislative authority of each county in which the proposed district is located.

(2) If in the opinion of the county health officer the existing water, sewerage, or drainage facilities are inadequate in the district to be created, and creation of the district is necessary for public health and safety, then the legislative authority of the county may declare by resolution that a water-sewer district is a public health and safety necessity, and the district shall be organized under this title, without a petition being required.

(3) Following receipt of a petition certified to contain a sufficient number of signatures, or upon declaring a district to be a public health and safety necessity, at a regular or special meeting the county legislative authority shall cause to be published once a week for at least two weeks in one or more newspapers of general circulation in the proposed district, a notice that such a petition has been presented, stating the time of the meeting at which the petition shall be considered, and setting forth the boundaries of the proposed district. When a petition is presented for hearing, each county legislative authority shall hear the petition or may adjourn the hearing from time to time not exceeding one month in all. Any person, firm, or corporation may appear before the county legislative authority and make objections to the establishment of the district or the proposed boundary lines thereof. Upon a final hearing each county legislative authority shall make such changes in the proposed boundary

lines within the county as it deems to be proper and shall establish and define the boundaries and shall find whether the proposed district will be conducive to the public health, welfare, and convenience and be of special benefit to the land included within the boundaries of the proposed district. No lands that will not, in the judgment of the county legislative authority, be benefited by inclusion therein, shall be included within the boundaries of the district. No change shall be made by the county legislative authority in the boundary lines to include any territory outside of the boundaries described in the petition, except that the boundaries of any proposed district may be extended by the county legislative authority to include other lands in the county upon a petition signed by the owners of all of the land within the proposed extension. [1996 c 230 § 203; 1990 c 259 § 27; 1987 c 33 § 3; 1985 c 469 § 58; 1982 1st ex.s. c 17 § 10; 1931 c 72 § 3; 1929 c 114 § 2; RRS § 11580. Cf. 1915 c 24 § 1; 1913 c 161 § 2. Formerly RCW 57.04.030 and 57.04.040.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

**RCW 57.04.050 Election—Notice—Excess tax levy.** Upon entry of the findings of the final hearing on the petition if one or more county legislative authorities find that the proposed district will be conducive to the public health, welfare, and convenience and will benefit the land therein, they shall present a resolution to the county auditor calling for a special election to be held at a date according to RCW 29A.04.330, at which a ballot proposition authorizing the district to be created shall be submitted to voters for their approval or rejection. The commissioners shall cause to be published a notice of the election for four successive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the proposed district, which notice shall state the hours during which the polls will be open, the boundaries of the district as finally adopted and the object of the election, and the notice shall also be posted ten days in ten public places in the proposed district. The district shall be created if the ballot proposition authorizing the district to be created is approved by a majority of the voters voting on the proposition.

A separate ballot proposition authorizing the district, if created, to impose a single-year excess levy for the preliminary expenses of the district shall be submitted to voters for their approval or rejection at the same special election, if the petition to create the district also proposed that a ballot proposition authorizing an excess levy be submitted to voters for their approval or rejection. The excess levy shall be proposed in the amount specified in the petition to create the district, not to exceed one dollar and twenty-five cents per thousand dollars of assessed value, and may only be submitted to voters for their approval or rejection if the special election is held in February, March, April, or May. The proposition to be effective must be approved in the manner set forth in Article VII, section 2(a) of the state Constitution. [2006 c 344 § 38; 1999 c 153 § 1; 1996 c 230 § 204; 1994 c 292 § 2; 1990 c 259 § 28; 1987 c 33 § 4; 1982 1st ex.s. c 17 § 11; 1973 1st ex.s. c 195 § 67; 1953 c 251 § 1; 1931 c 72 § 4; 1929 c 114 § 3; RRS § 11581. Cf. 1927 c 230 § 1; 1915 c 24 § 2; 1913 c 161 § 3.]

**Effective date—2006 c 344 §§ 1-16 and 18-40:** See note following RCW 29A.04.311.

**Part headings not law—1999 c 153:** "Part headings as used in this act do not constitute any part of the law." [1999 c 153 § 77.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

**Findings—Intent—1994 c 292:** "The legislature finds that the monitoring and treatment requirements of the federal safe drinking water act place increasing burdens and cost on public water supply systems, especially smaller systems and rural systems. Across the state, those systems are turning to existing systems and their county governments for help, which may include assumption of the system.

It is the intent of the legislature to encourage larger existing systems to assist or acquire troubled systems or those systems burdened by federal requirements, to provide financial protection for that assistance, and to protect receivers of failed water systems." [1994 c 292 § 1.]

**Severability—Effective dates and termination dates—Construction—1973 1st ex.s. c 195:** See notes following RCW 84.52.043.

**RCW 57.04.055 County auditor to conduct elections—Expenses.**

All elections held pursuant to this title, whether general or special, shall be conducted by the county auditor of the county in which the district is located. Except as provided in RCW 57.04.060, the expense of all such elections shall be paid for out of the funds of the district. [1996 c 230 § 208; 1941 c 210 § 40; Rem. Supp. 1941 § 9425-49. Formerly RCW 56.04.080.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

**RCW 57.04.060 District created—Name—Formation expenses.** If at the election a majority of the voters voting upon the proposition vote in favor of the formation of the district the county legislative authority shall so declare in its canvass of the returns of the election to be made within ten days after the date of the election, and the district shall then be and become a municipal corporation of the state of Washington, and the name of the district shall be the name of the district as provided in the petition and the ballot.

The county's expenses incurred in the formation of the district, including the election costs associated with the ballot proposition authorizing the district, election of the initial commissioners under RCW 57.12.030, and the ballot proposition authorizing the excess levy, shall be repaid to the county if the district is formed. [1996 c 230 § 205; 1929 c 114 § 5; RRS § 11583. Cf. 1913 c 161 § 5.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

**RCW 57.04.065 Change of name—Procedure—Effect.** Any district may apply to change its name by filing with the county legislative authority in which was filed the original petition for organization of the district, a certified copy of a resolution of its board of commissioners adopted by majority vote of all of the members of that board at a regular meeting thereof providing for such change of name. After approval of the new name by the county legislative authority, all proceedings for the district shall be had under the changed name, but all existing obligations and contracts of the district entered into under its former name shall remain outstanding without change and with the validity thereof unimpaired and unaffected by such change of name. A change of name heretofore made by any existing district in this state, substantially in the manner approved under this section, is ratified, confirmed, and validated. [1996 c 230 § 206; 1984 c 147 § 7.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

**RCW 57.04.070 When two or more petitions filed.** Whenever two or more petitions for the formation of a district shall be filed as provided in this chapter, the petition describing the greater area shall supersede all others and an election shall first be held thereunder, and no lesser district shall ever be created within the limits in whole or in part of any district, except as provided in RCW 36.94.420. [1996 c 230 § 207; 1985 c 141 § 6; 1981 c 45 § 9; 1929 c 114 § 4; RRS § 11582. Cf. 1913 c 161 § 4.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

**Legislative declaration—"District" defined—Severability—1981 c 45:** See notes following RCW 36.93.090.

**RCW 57.04.080 Act cumulative.** \*This act shall not be construed to repeal, amend, or modify any law heretofore enacted providing a method for water supply for any city or town in this state, but shall be held to be an additional and concurrent method providing for such purpose. Nor shall this act be construed to repeal \*\*chapter 161 of the Laws of 1913, pages 533 to 552, or amendments thereto. [1929 c 114 § 24; RRS § 11601.]

**Reviser's note:** \*(1) The language "this act" appeared in 1929 c 114, the basic water district law, which is codified as follows: RCW 57.04.020, 57.04.030, 57.04.050 through 57.04.080, 57.04.100, 57.08.010, 57.08.050, 57.12.010, 57.12.020, 57.12.030, 57.16.010, 57.16.020, 57.16.030, 57.16.040, 57.16.050, 57.16.060, 57.16.070, 57.16.080 through 57.16.100, 57.20.010, 57.20.100 through 57.20.140, 57.24.010, 57.24.020, 57.24.040, and 57.24.050.

\*\* (2) As to the reference "chapter 161 of the Laws of 1913," see note following RCW 57.06.010.

**RCW 57.04.090 Dissolution—Legislative and court methods.** Dissolution of district, see chapters 36.96 and 53.48 RCW.

**RCW 57.04.100 Dissolution—Election method.** Any district may be disincorporated in the same manner (insofar as the same is applicable) as is provided in RCW 35.07.010 through 35.07.220 for the disincorporation of cities and towns, except that the petition for disincorporation shall be signed by not less than twenty-five percent of the voters in the district. [1996 c 230 § 209; 1994 c 81 § 80; 1929 c 114 § 25; 1917 c 147 § 1; RRS § 11602.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

**RCW 57.04.110 Dissolution when district's boundaries identical with municipality.** A district whose boundaries are identical with, or if the district is located entirely within, the boundaries of a city or town may be dissolved by summary dissolution proceedings if the district is free from all debts and liabilities except contractual obligations between the district and the city or town. Summary dissolution shall take place if the board of commissioners of the district votes unanimously to dissolve the district and to turn all of its property over to the city or town within which the district lies, and the council of such city or town unanimously passes an ordinance accepting the conveyance of the property and assets of the district tendered to the city or town by the district. [1996 c 230 § 210; 1955 c 358 § 1.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

*Acceptance by town: RCW 35.92.012.*

**RCW 57.04.120 Sewerage improvement districts located in counties with populations of from forty thousand to less than seventy thousand become sewer districts.** (1) On and after March 16, 1979, any sewerage improvement districts created under Title 85 RCW and located in a county with a population of from forty thousand to less than seventy thousand shall become districts and shall be operated, maintained, and have the same powers as districts created under this title, upon being so ordered by the county legislative authority of the county in which such district is located after a hearing of which notice is given by publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the district and mailed to any known creditors, holders of contracts, and obligees at least thirty days prior to such hearing. After such hearing if the county legislative authority finds the converting of such district to be in the best interest of that district, it shall order that such sewer improvement district shall become a district and fix the date of such conversion. All debts, contracts, and obligations created while attempting to organize or operate a sewerage improvement district and all other financial obligations and powers of the district to satisfy such obligations established under Title 85 RCW are legal and valid until they are fully satisfied or discharged under Title 85 RCW.

(2) The board of supervisors of a sewerage improvement district in a county with a population of from forty thousand to less than seventy thousand shall act as the board of commissioners of the district under subsection (1) of this section until other members of

the board of commissioners of the district are elected and qualified. There shall be an election on the same date as the 1979 state general election and the seats of all three members of the governing authority of every entity which was previously known as a sewerage improvement district in a county with a population of from forty thousand to less than seventy thousand shall be up for election. The election shall be held in the manner provided for in RCW 57.12.030 for the election of the first board of commissioners of a district. Thereafter, the terms of office of the members of the governing body shall be determined under RCW 57.12.030. [1996 c 230 § 211; 1991 c 363 § 136; 1979 c 35 § 1. Formerly RCW 56.04.120.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

**Purpose—Captions not law—1991 c 363:** See notes following RCW 2.32.180.

**RCW 57.04.130 Sewerage improvement districts operating as sewer districts become water-sewer districts—Procedure.** Any sewerage improvement district which has been operating as a sewer district shall be a district under this title as of March 16, 1979, upon being so ordered by the county legislative authority of the county in which such district is located after a hearing of which notice is given by publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the district and mailed to any known creditors, holders of contracts, and obligees at least thirty days prior to such hearing. After such hearing if the county legislative authority finds that the sewerage improvement district was operating as a district and that the converting of such district will be in the best interest of that district, it shall order that such sewer improvement district shall become a district immediately upon the passage of the resolution containing such order. The debts, contracts, and obligations of any sewerage improvement district which has been erroneously operating as a district are recognized as legal and binding. The members of the government authority of any sewerage improvement district which has been operating as a district and who were erroneously elected as sewer district commissioners shall be recognized as the governing authority of a district. The members of the governing authority shall continue in office for the term for which they were elected. [1996 c 230 § 212; 1979 c 35 § 2. Formerly RCW 56.04.130.]

**Part headings not law—Effective date—1996 c 230:** See notes following RCW 57.02.001.

**RCW 57.04.140 Formation—Alternative method—New development.**  
(1) As an alternative means to forming a water-sewer district, a county legislative authority may authorize the formation of a water-sewer district to serve a new development that at the time of formation does not have any residents, at written request of sixty percent of the owners of the area to be included in the proposed district. The county legislative authority shall review the proposed district according to the procedures and criteria in RCW 57.02.040.

(2) The county legislative authority shall appoint the initial water-sewer commissioners of the district. The commissioners shall serve until seventy-five percent of the development is sold and occupied, or until some other time as specified by the county legislative authority when the district is approved. Commissioners serving under this section are not entitled to any form of compensation from the district.

(3) New commissioners shall be elected according to the procedures in chapter 57.12 RCW at the next election held under RCW 29A.04.321 that follows more than ninety days after the date seventy-five percent of the development is sold and occupied, or after the time specified by the county legislative authority when the district is approved.

(4) A water-sewer district created under this section may be transferred to a city or county, or dissolved if the district is inactive, by order of the county legislative authority at the written request of sixty percent of the owners of the area included in the district. [2015 c 53 § 87; 1997 c 447 § 4.]

**Finding—Purpose—Construction—1997 c 447:** See notes following RCW 70.05.074.