Washington State Boundary Review Board for Thurston County

In 1967 the Washington State Legislature became concerned with rapid growth in metropolitan areas, the proliferation of small cities, and the haphazard and competitive extension of municipal services and boundaries. They passed the Boundary Review Board Act (RCW 36.93) to insure that cities, towns and special purpose districts adequately plan and finance urban services and boundary extensions in a manner consistent with comprehensive land use plans.

Under the provisions of this Act, Thurston County established its Boundary Review Board in 1977.

The Boundary Review Board has the power to make decisions on such issues as incorporations, annexations, mergers, disincorporations, etc., by cities, towns and special purpose districts (e.g., fire districts). The Board must base its decisions on specific factors and objectives stated in the Boundary Review Board Act. It can approve, modify and approve, or deny a proposal. Its decisions are final unless appealed to the Superior Court of the county.

The Board is a quasi-judicial, administrative body. This means it makes decisions following procedures like those of a court of law, but only in a narrow administrative role. For example, after hearing sworn testimony from witnesses, the Board can decide on proposed new city boundaries (i.e., annexations). They cannot decide what the zoning should be, or whether a site should be in or out of an urban growth area — zoning and urban growth area boundaries are under the authority of the cities and county.

Board members are residents of the county they serve. The five members of the Thurston County Boundary Review Board serve for four-year terms. Two members are appointed by the Governor, one by the mayors of the cities and towns in the county, one by the Board of Thurston County Commissioners, and one from nominees of the special purpose districts. They are not allowed to hold other local government elected or appointed positions or jobs.

The Board employs a non-member through the Thurston Regional Planning Council to serve as the Chief Clerk. The Thurston County Prosecutor's Office provides legal counsel.