

DRAFT
Utility Advisory Committee (UAC)
Meeting Minutes
September 5, 2013

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Curtz.

Roll Call

- Thad Curtz
- Barbara Day
- Richard Doenges
- Carol Law
- Lorelei Walker
- Chris Ward
- Kim Andresen
- Margaret Drennan
- David Dunn
- Jennifer Sievert
- Steve Fossum

Councilmember Karen Rogers attended.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved. Note: the Rates agenda item was postponed to the October UAC meeting.

Approval of Minutes

The June 6, 2013 meeting minutes were approved. Copy edit suggestions just give them to Lindsay.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Announcements from UAC and Staff

New UAC member Steve Fossum introduced himself and described his interests in utilities. Liz Hoenig announced her departure from the City and noted that the staff liaison for the UAC had not been identified yet. She assured the UAC that they would be well supported. Ron Jones provided an update on the regional plastic bag ban. Thurston County as developed a draft model ordinance that they are asking the cities in Thurston County to consider and adopt. The ordinance is consistent with the recommendations of the UAC and City Council. Excluded from the ban are the thicker/larger plastic bags. The ban focuses on very light-weight bags that are not easily reusable. Staff is still deciding whether/when a Public Hearing on this might occur with the City Council. Ron also shared that LeMay stopped recycling plastic bags because they lost their market to re-sell them. Grocery store collections will still continue of the plastic bags, because they likely have a cleaner source.

Councilmember Karen Rogers attended and discussed these topics:

- LOTT and utility rates and UAC comments on these.
- Trees and property lines and where trees are planting along boundary lines.
- Used drug needles as waste in the downtown.

Olympia Planning Commission (OPC) Update

Kim Andresen gave an update on the Planning Commission activities. OPC is working on the downtown master plan and reviewing the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) with a draft letter of recommendation to the City Council. The OPC had a retreat recently and toured the potential neighborhood centers in Olympia and they also did a downtown historic walking tour.

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BUSINESS OF THE EVENING

Panel Discussion on Aquatic Habitat Improvement Priorities for the Storm and Surface Water Utility

With staff support, the UAC hosted an open-ended discussion with several regional experts in the field of aquatic resources research and management. The panel members in attendance were:

- Tom Mumford, retired Washington Department of Natural Resources/University of Washington Nearshore Science Team (marine plants and ecology)
- Jeffrey Fisher, Southwest Washington Branch Chief, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/Marine Fisheries Service (fisheries biology/ecotoxicology)
- Stephen Stanley, Puget Sound Characterization Project, Washington Department of Ecology (watersheds and wetlands)

The panelists will not be making presentations at the meeting. Rather, they hosted an unstructured discussion around the following general questions:

- Given limited City resources and various State and federal mandates, how do we best prioritize the type of work we do?
 - What type of aquatic resources should we be trying to protect (e.g., instream, marine, nearshore)?
 - What tools are most effective (e.g., education, capital facilities, regulations, incentives)?
 - What are the most important actions that we should pursue?
- What does successful environmental protection look like in an urban setting?
 - What should we try to accomplish in the next 5 years?

Staff and the UAC discussed how to optimize the allocation of staff time and capital investments between Program responsibilities.

Below is a summary of some of the topics discussed:

- Focus restoration work on diagnosing and responding to the problem, rather than the symptoms of the problem.
- Base decisions on a knowledge of the entire ecosystem and its physical processes. Systems move water, sediments, wood, nutrients, and so forth. Understand the interconnections and dependencies. There will be a range of variation within these dynamics that support the food web.
- Restore the natural processes in order to restore the habitat and ecosystem. Do not put restoration structures in place without good water quality, for example.
- Lack good standards regarding habitat restoration efforts, but we can identify habitat-limiting factors, in the context of improving the processes.
- Develop already existing land and property first – rather than tearing up undeveloped land, which has significant impacts on aquatic habitat. Start prioritizing based on a few key indicators for water quality and habitat. Need to incentivize brownfield development.
- Water quality would be a good focus in streams where habitat potential is not good, and aquatic habitat investments in those watersheds that are more intact.
- Maintaining over 65% forest in watersheds helps buffers the impacts of urbanization. Over 10% impervious surface cover prompts a noticeable begins a decline in aquatic habitat. However, impacts are on a continuum rather than at discrete thresholds.

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- Water input and balances change with urbanization. LOTT may now be the largest discharge of water to Budd Inlet. Need to manage the outfalls and their immediate environments
- Consider managing the resources for the big events (e.g. rainfall event) Big events may become more commonplace and dictate the resource
- Need more effective decentralized stormwater systems and public willingness to use. UAC members received links to the technologies discussed.
- Need to get the public involved in collecting data and making it more available.

Adjournment

Chair Curtz adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.