



Utility Advisory Committee

Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Update

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Title

Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Update

Recommended Action

Provide an informational update on City work to manage downtown flooding and potential sea level rise. Receive input from the UAC.

Report

Issue:

The implications of climate change and sea level rise are long-term concerns for Olympia. City staff responds to sea rise concerns by understanding how Olympia could be affected and implementing appropriate site-specific actions. City Staff help keep City Council, advisory committees, and the community knowledgeable of the issue and risks.

Staff Contact:

Eric Christensen, Planning and Engineering Manager, Public Works/Water Resources, 360.570.3741

Presenter(s):

Same

Background and Analysis:

The City acknowledges the risk that sea level rise poses to its downtown. Built on low-lying historical fill, the downtown has a long history of flooding. In recent years, several construction projects and improved emergency response actions have appreciably reduced flooding.

The City first documented its vulnerability to climate change and sea level rise in 1991. Since 2007, staff has updated City Council and completed annual work plans that improve our understanding of the Olympia-specific implications of potential sea rise. The work plans seek to provide tangible, straightforward information regarding how increasing tides could affect built and public infrastructure systems in downtown.

The work consistently confirms Olympia's vulnerability to sea rise and helps identify needed actions to reduce risks. While City staff is challenged to predict the magnitude or timing of future sea rise, we do understand the downtown landscape, its flood potential and appropriate initial actions. Regardless of how climate change and sea rise evolve, understanding and managing downtown

flooding is expected to remain a City priority. As flood managers, the Storm and Surface Water Utility can expect to play a key role sea rise response.

During the UAC meeting, Water Resources staff will discuss:

- Sea level rise processes
- Results of the recently-released (5th) assessment report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- Downtown flooding mechanisms and site-specific vulnerabilities
- Potential short-term and long-term responses to reduce flood risks
- Proposed next steps

Neighborhood/Community Interests:

Various community organizations and governmental agencies are engaged in climate change and sea level issues. In the years to come, community engagement with the issue is expected to increase. Storm and Surface Water staff provide annual updates to the community.

Options:

Not applicable at this time.

Financial Impact:

Through the Storm and Surface Water Utility, the City allocates \$150,000 bi-annually for downtown flooding and sea level rise work efforts.