



## Land Use & Environment Committee

### Update on Regional Septic Conversion Strategy

**Agenda Date:** 9/15/2016  
**Agenda Item Number:** 5.D  
**File Number:** 16-0761

---

**Type:** information **Version:** 1 **Status:** Filed

---

#### **Title**

Update on Regional Septic Conversion Strategy

#### **Recommended Action**

##### **Committee Recommendation:**

Not referred to a committee.

##### **City Manager Recommendation:**

Receive the update. Briefing; No action requested.

#### **Report**

##### **Issue:**

Whether to receive an update on the regional septic conversion strategy.

##### **Staff Contact:**

Andy Haub, P.E., Water Resources Director, Public Works, 360.753.8475

##### **Presenter(s):**

Andy Haub, P.E., Water Resources Director

#### **Background and Analysis:**

The Cities of Lacey, Tumwater, Olympia, and Thurston County are working on a strategy to help connect onsite septic systems (OSS) within the urban growth area to municipal sewer. City staff will provide an update on the regional work effort as well as Olympia's ongoing Septic-to-Sewer Program.

The 16,000 OSS in use by residents of the three local cities and their urban growth areas pose a threat to public and environment health. However, converting to municipal sewer systems is challenging. Approximately 1,980 septic systems are within the City limits. Another 2,180 are located in Olympia's urban growth area.

In April 2016, City Council directed staff to continue work on a regional conversion strategy. Over the past few months, we have met with Lacey, Tumwater, and Thurston County staff to better define the strategy and our respective roles. While many questions remain, the strategy will focus on regional coordination and local implementation. The strategy will acknowledge the unique dynamics in each

jurisdiction.

In August, the Mayors of the three Cities sent a letter to the Thurston County Commissioners requesting their support for the strategy and the City's approach (see attached letter).

Meanwhile, the City of Olympia continues to support OSS conversions through the Septic-to-Sewer Program. Additionally, Olympia restricts the installation of new onsite systems to very limited circumstances. Olympia encourages and financially supports conversions:

- Seven properties converted from septic to sewer in 2016 to date. Olympia's average since 2009 is 13 systems per year.
- Later this year, residents will be able to pay their City general facility charge and LOTT capacity development charge over time.
- Funding is available to construct a limited number of city-financed sewer extensions in future years.
- Olympia sends postcards to remind septic system owners to inspect and pump their OSS. We mail postcards to about one-third of OSS owners each year.

Next steps with the regional strategy include continued discussion with the County Commissioners and scoping a public education campaign. The campaign will help explain the risks of urban OSS and the potential conversion strategies.

**Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):**

Onsite septic systems have public and environmental health implications for our community. Converting onsite systems to municipal sewer is complex and costly.

**Options:**

N/A.

**Financial Impact:**

None at this time. The Wastewater Utility currently funds these work efforts. However, increased public education and/or conversion work would have financial impacts for both the Utility and septic system owners.

**Attachment(s):**

Letter from Mayors