



PBIA Advisory Board

Sea Level Rise Response Planning - Update

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Title

Sea Level Rise Response Planning - Update

Recommended Action

Briefing only. No action required.

Report

Issue:

Receive an update on the sea level rise planning work initiated by the City of Olympia (City), the Port of Olympia (Port) and LOTT Clean Water Alliance (LOTT).

Staff Contact:

Andy Haub, P.E., Water Resources Director, 360.573.8475

Presenter(s):

Andy Haub

Background and Analysis:

Sea level rise presents a prominent flooding risk to our downtown. Largely built on sediments excavated from Budd Inlet over 100 years ago, the downtown area has always been vulnerable to flooding. City staff currently manage and control, sometimes just barely, the flooding risk during high tides and high flows in the Deschutes River.

The City began work on climate change and sea rise in the early 1990s. Over the years, we have accumulated extensive data on the elevations of critical downtown infrastructure, buildings, and shorelines relative to potential water elevations in Budd Inlet. This information provides a sound basis for meaningful long-term planning.

Consistent with the goals and policies of the City of Olympia Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Strategy, staff initiated work on a formal sea level rise response plan in early 2017. The City, the Port and LOTT are jointly funding and participating in the planning process. The three entities share common concerns regarding sea level rise, yet have unique individual vulnerabilities.

The PBIA was briefed on the problem and planning process on July 13, 2017. As explained at that

time, the tasks to be completed by the planning process include:

- Evaluate the best available science regarding potential sea rise.
- Develop a sea level rise planning framework incorporating community input.
- Conduct a vulnerability and risk assessment of downtown assets. A time-consuming task, the assessment details the critical infrastructure, services, and amenities embodied in our downtown and Port peninsula.
- Develop specific strategies for protecting downtown for approximately 100 years.
- Complete a formal plan including governance needs, implementation schedules, and finances.

The planning process is on schedule. In September, staff will share strategies with our community and elected officials for protecting downtown from six feet of sea rise. Physically protecting downtown while preserving social and cultural amenities is central to the potential strategies. Implementation of the strategies will require both technical adaptation and long-term community commitment. Local engagement in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change is also important.

Additional information on sea rise science and the plan is available on the City's webpage.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Various community groups and agencies are working on climate change and sea level rise issues. Over the past year, involved citizens have voiced their support for the planning process while raising concerns including the reliability of long-term sea rise projections, the feasibility of protecting the downtown area in the long-term, and costs.

Options:

Information only.

Financial Impact:

None at this time. However, potential long-term private and public impacts are appreciable.

Attachments:

None