City Hall
601 4th Avenue E.
Olympia, WA 98501
360-753-8244

Utility Advisory Committee

Sea Level Rise Response Planning Update

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Title
Sea Level Rise Response Planning Update

Recommended Action
Committee Recommendation:
No action required - briefing only

Report
Issue:
Briefing the Utility Advisory Committee on sea level rise response planning efforts

Staff Contact:
Eric Christensen, Water Resources Director, Public Works Department, 360.570.3741

Presenter:
Eric Christensen

Background and Analysis:
Downtown Olympia has always been vulnerable to flooding. The confluence of high water levels in Capitol Lake and high tides in Budd Inlet can cause water to overtop the shoreline and spill into downtown streets and low-lying areas. Even with minimal amounts of sea level rise, the risk to our downtown's built environment and its many community services increases quickly and substantially. Downtown flooding is anticipated to become more frequent and severe in the future.

The City's awareness of and work related to climate change and sea level rise dates back to the early 1990s. Olympia was one of the first cities in the nation to begin planning for climate change. The City completed numerous studies since the early 1990s (visit the Sea Level Rise webpage to view):

- *City of Olympia's Response to the Challenge of Global Climate Change* (1991)
- *City of Olympia Preliminary Assessment of Sea Level Rise in Olympia, WA* (1993)
- *City of Olympia's Response to the Challenge of Climate Change* (2007)
- *City of Olympia's Engineered Response to Sea Level Rise* (2011)

In early 2017, the City, the Port and LOTT established an Interlocal Agreement (ILA) to jointly fund and participate in a formal sea level rise planning process for downtown Olympia, the Budd Inlet

Treatment Plant and the Port peninsula. The collaboration resulted in the *Olympia Sea Level Rise Response Plan* (Plan) adopted in 2019. The Utility Advisory Committee played a role throughout the development of the plan and provided a letter recommending its adoption. As a reminder, the Plan envisioned a phased approach with comprehensive near-term, mid-term and long-term strategies for minimizing and preventing flooding from rising sea levels. The Plan addressed: climate science and sea level rise projections (Chapter 3), vulnerability and risk (Chapter 4), and approaches for adaptation (Chapter 5) that included physical and operational (Chapter 6) and governance and informational (Chapter 7) strategies along with their estimated costs (Chapter 8).
In February 2020, the Partners entered into a second ILA that established a Joint Administrative Committee comprised of elected officials tasked with developing a governance structure to implement the Plan. The Joint Administrative Committee, along with the Depart of Ecology and the Squaxin Island Tribe met on three occasions and drafted a new ILA and by-laws for establishing the Olympia Sea Level Rise Response Collaborative. The draft ILA and by-laws are currently being reviewed by the Partners' legal staff with the intent of having the agreement executed by the end of the year.

Staff will also provide an update on emergency response planning and stormwater drainage modification projects to help prevent flooding in downtown Olympia.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):
Various community groups and other agencies are engaged in climate change and sea level rise issues. The City of Olympia Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Strategy support developing a sea level response plan. Citizens voiced their support for the sea level response planning process during four well-attended public meetings conducted during the 18-month planning process. Comments received at each public meeting are included in meeting summary reports that are available on the City's website. Coordination with the City's regional climate change mitigation planning is also occurring.

Options:
None at this time

Financial Impact:
Chapter 8 (Cost of Adaptation) of the Plan includes high level costs for the physical strategies by focus area. Estimated total costs range from $190M to $350M. Costs will be spread out over decades and shared by the Project Partners and the community.

In the near team, Storm and Surface Water capital budgets include $125,000 for continued planning and technical work associated with Plan implementation. Additional capital facility funding is provided annually for downtown flood reduction work.

Hyperlink:
Sea Level Rise website