



Utility Advisory Committee Tribal Acknowledgement Language

Agenda Date: 12/2/2021
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Title

Tribal Acknowledgement Language

Recommended Action

Review, discuss and move to approve the City's tribal acknowledgement language or propose new tribal land acknowledgement language for consideration by the City Council.

Report

Issue:

Whether to approve the City's approved language that acknowledges the Steh-Chass Band of Indigenous people or draft new language that acknowledges the City's infrastructure is located on unceded tribal lands.

Staff Contact:

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Background and Analysis:

UAC Committee member Vernon suggested that UAC agendas include language that acknowledges that the UAC meetings are held on unceded tribal lands. At the October 7, 2021 UAC meeting, the following City-approved language was provided:

We would like to acknowledge the indigenous people who have stewarded this land since time immemorial and who still inhabit the area today, the Steh-Chass Band of Indigenous people of the Squaxin Island Tribe.

At the time, the UAC posed several comments and questions:

1. The statement appears to be a tribal acknowledgement, not a tribal land acknowledgement.
2. Was the statement provided by the Squaxin Island Tribe or was it negotiated with the City?
3. The City's McAllister Wellfield and the majority of the City's primary water supply transmission main is located on Nisqually tribal lands. The McAllister Wellfield is the source of approximately 75% of the City's water supply.
4. Is the City-approved statement the only language that can be used or can the UAC propose alternative acknowledgement language?

At the November 4, 2021 UAC meeting, Staff provided the following feedback:

1. The City Manager's office recognizes that the statement provided in October was intended as

- a tribal acknowledgement, not a tribal land acknowledgement.
2. The tribal acknowledgement was provided by the Squaxin Island Tribe and was not negotiated by the City.
 3. Regional tribal relations are government to government.
 4. The Squaxin Island Tribe feels strongly that the entirety of Olympia's city limits is located within their tribal lands.
 5. The City Manager's office indicates that only the statement provided in October is approved as a tribal acknowledgement.
 6. If the statement provided in October does not fulfill the UAC's intent, the UAC can propose alternative language along with an explanation to City Council for approval.

At the November 4, 2021 UAC meeting, the UAC indicated they would prefer to propose alternative tribal lands acknowledgement language. Committee member Vernon proposed the following language that may serve as a starting point:

We would like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered on the unceded, ancestral homeland of the Squaxin Island Tribe, "People of the Water." We honor the past, present and future indigenous caretakers of these lands and waters with gratitude. Let this acknowledgement serve as a reminder to honor both the Squaxin and their lands and waters we benefit from today.

The UAC will need a motion to approve any proposed language to be communicated to City Council in a letter.

Financial Impact:

None

Attachments:

None