



City Council

Approval of a Resolution Authorizing a Grant Application to the NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge Grant

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Title

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Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Approve a Resolution Authorizing a Grant Application to the NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge Grant

Report

Issue:

Whether to support submittal of a federal grant application to the NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

None - Consent Calendar Item

Background and Analysis:

The NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge is a federal grant program administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Coastal Management. The focus of the grant program is on collaborative projects that increase the resilience of coastal communities to extreme weather and other impacts of climate change, including sea level rise. Approximately \$575 million is available nationwide and is made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act. Funded projects will address risk reduction and regional collaboration and equity, as well as build enduring capacity for adaptation.

In August 2023, the City of Olympia, together with the Squaxin Island Tribe, State of Washington Department of Enterprise Services, Port of Olympia and LOTT Clean Water Alliance submitted a letter of intent to apply for funding. The letter of intent (attached) outlined a project proposal entitled “*Restoring the Deschutes Estuary and Building Community Resilience in the South Puget Sound.*”

This proposed initiative aligns two multi-jurisdictional and collaborative efforts (Olympia Sea Level Rise Response Plan and Deschutes Estuary Restoration) to enhance and coordinate major coastal resilience activities in the City of Olympia and Puget Sound. These two efforts are dependent upon each other - progress on one is necessary to fully implement the other. The City’s letter of intent proposed a project that would receive the maximum possible funding - \$75 million.

In October 2023, the City was informed by NOAA that we were invited to submit a full application. This was very exciting news. The level of interest in this new program has been very strong, with NOAA having received 869 eligible letters of intent requesting approximately \$16 billion in funding. Through a rigorous review process, NOAA selected 120 applicants to submit full proposals, for a total requested funding amount of approximately \$3 billion. From these, NOAA anticipates selecting approximately 40 proposals totaling \$575 million.

Since October, the City and our partners have been refining and improving our proposal. In broad elements, the project proposal includes the following:

Deschutes Estuary

- Additional funding to complete design and permitting
- Construction of habitat containment cells to facilitate shoreline restoration

Sea Level Rise

- Implement mid-term adaptation strategies from the Olympia Sea Level Rise Response Plan, including:
 - Raising landscaping and elevating paths with Percival Landing Park
 - Installing raised landscaping, planters and flood gates along downtown streets that parallel the shoreline
 - Elevating low lying shoreline segments and critical facilities along East Bay and the Port Peninsula
- Analyze the costs, benefits and approaches of separating portions of the combined sewer and stormwater systems.

The proposal also includes additional staff and intern capacity with the City, State and Tribe to manage successful implementation of the project.

Staff is currently finalizing the grant application and soliciting various letters of support for the project proposal. The grant is due by February 13.

Neighborhood/Community Interests:

The community has a high degree of interest in the restoration of the Deschutes Estuary and in the implementation of the Olympia Sea Level Rise Response Plan. Both of these efforts have a large impact on downtown Olympia and on the Deschutes Watershed/Lower Budd Inlet.

Climate Analysis:

Consistent with the grant criteria, the project proposal is aimed at improving community resilience to the impacts of a changing climate. If successful, Olympia and our regional partners would receive significant resources towards implementation of the Olympia Sea Level Rise Response Plan and Deschutes Estuary Restoration. Future restoration of the Deschutes Estuary has the potential to support significant carbon sequestration.

Equity Analysis:

As a part of the grant application, the City and its partners will be developing a strategy for equitable community engagement focused on underserved, underrepresented and marginalized communities. This is an important part of NOAA's review and ranking of project proposals.

This project also includes close partnership and collaboration with the Squaxin Island Tribe, consistent with the Accord between the City and Tribe that expresses a strong, mutual goal of restoring the Deschutes Estuary.

Options:

1. Approve the Resolution authorizing a grant application to the NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge.
2. Do not approve the Resolution.

Financial Impact:

If successful, the City and regional partners could receive up to \$75 million in federal funding to support climate resilience efforts. There is no required match funding. Approximately half of the funding would go towards Deschutes Estuary Restoration efforts led by the State and Squaxin Island Tribe, while the other half would go towards sea level rise adaptation by the City and Port.

Attachments:

Resolution
Letter of Intent